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LIBRARIANSHIP  
ESSAYS ON APPLIED BIBLIOGRAPHY



# LIBRARIANSHIP

## ESSAYS ON APPLIED BIBLIOGRAPHY

By

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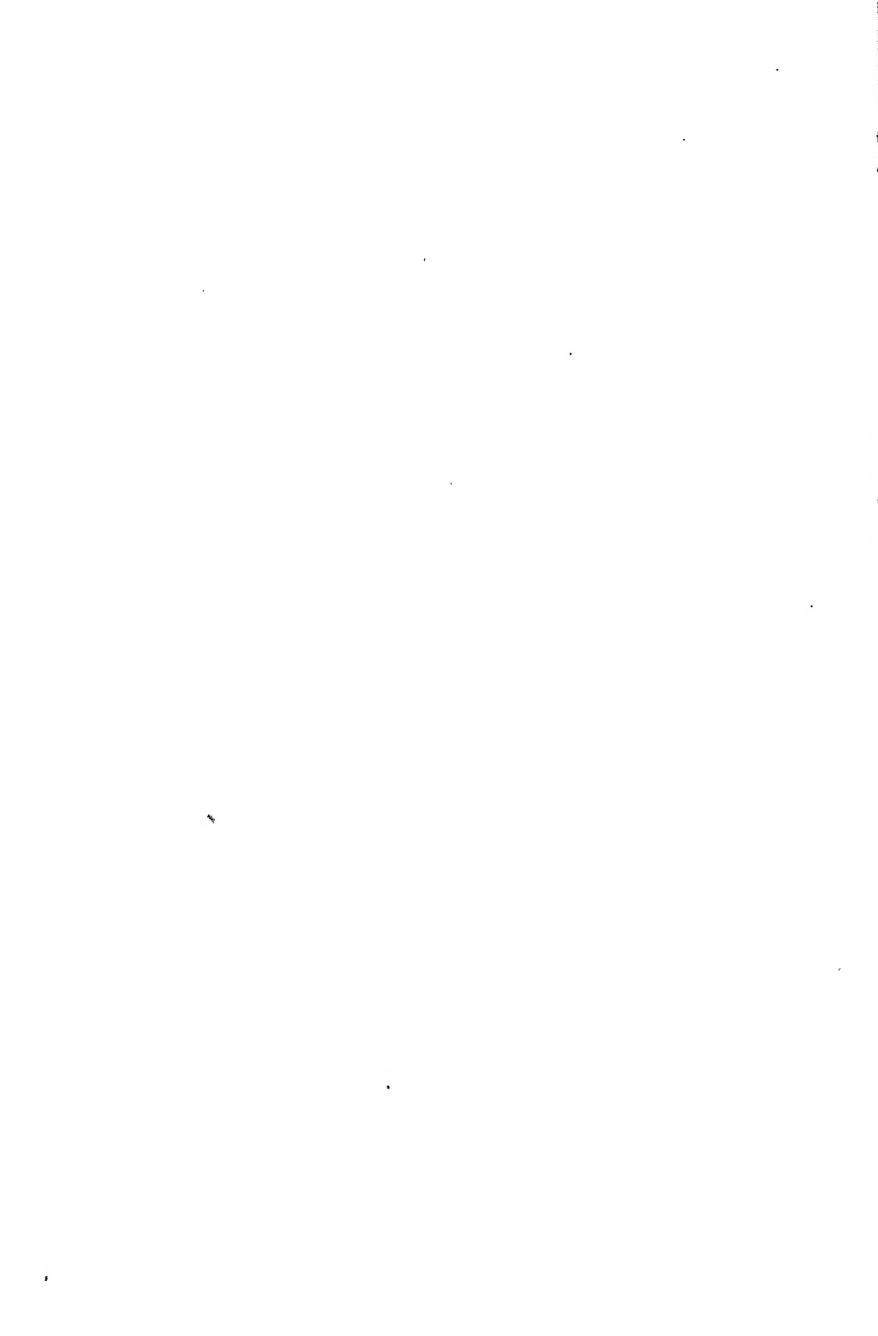
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## PROLOGUE

THESE essays grew out of a study of the writings of American librarians during the last thirty years on the subject of professional training for librarianship. This brought with it a realisation that though in Great Britain we have given much time to the study of the many separate departments of librarianship, we have paid very little attention to the subject as a whole. Cataloguing, classification, reference work, children's libraries, extension work, finance—these and similar topics are dealt with separately by countless books and articles. But they are all parts of a whole, deriving their only significance from the system of which they are members. Unless we lift up our eyes from the part to the whole we shall surely miss something of the true meaning of the part. We shall be tempted also to treat that part as an end in itself. This has indeed happened with subjects such as classification and administration, and it explains some of the confusion which surrounds these topics. Library classification is a practical technique with a definite purpose. Its methods are only of interest in so far as they conform to that end ; and as the purpose varies in different libraries and different subjects, so the method must be varied. That indeed is the great achievement of the Bliss classification.

So also with administration. This above all other topics loses both meaning and value if regarded as an end in itself. It cannot moreover be taught in a classroom, nor can it be tested by written examination. Administration is in essence *leadership*, combined with

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a practical knowledge of the work of the institution which is being administered. Some men are born administrators : some are not. But given the necessary temperament, there is only one way of developing administrative ability, and that is by working for a long period under a good administrator, watching his methods and noting the reasons for his successes and his failures. Theoretic training can be no substitute for practical experience in producing good administrators. But it can offer, in addition to a knowledge of the various branches of librarianship, an appreciation of the subject as a coherent whole. And this surely is exactly what the young librarian needs to serve as a background for his administrative experience. The administrator, even more than the classifier or the reference librarian or the worker in any other department, must be able to view the subject as a single organised system, to arrange each part in its right relation to other parts and to place the whole in its right association with other fields of knowledge.

There seems to be a need therefore for a fresh view of librarianship in this light. Such a view is indeed implied by the existence of full-time training courses which derive much of their value from the fact that the subject can profitably be treated as an organised whole. One of the disadvantages of part-time courses is that they tend to give a disjointed view of the subject, separating it into a series of distinct compartments.

These essays will be justified if they help to give substance to this view of the theory of librarianship. They can do no more than introduce the reader to the subject ; but they may serve to open up new fields for exploration and discussion and study. Quite evidently there is much work still to be done, particularly in

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working out the external relationships which are briefly considered in Chapter II. The idea of librarianship as "applied bibliography" may help also to emphasise the fact that bibliography is indeed the heart of the whole subject ; everything else in librarianship revolves round this central nucleus. Assuming there is an organised system of librarianship, its corner-stone can be nothing other than bibliography : for on this the whole structure depends.

University College, London.  
June, 1948.

R. I.



## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM STATED

THOSE who are familiar with the literature of librarianship in both Great Britain and the United States will have been struck by some notable differences between the two. There are at least three tendencies in the American approach to librarianship which are absent in this country. There is first a certain almost childlike faith in the value of statistical research as applied to librarianship. When figures are gathered together, arranged in tables and analysed, they acquire a kind of hypnotism from which we in Great Britain cannot claim to be entirely immune. We are however by nature suspicious of figures and are less susceptible than our colleagues across the Atlantic to their magic. We have little faith in the divinity of the merely numerical, and if as a result we sometimes act without apparent system or plan, we escape those many traps which are here set for the unwary. A second difference is the American preoccupation with administration as a subject of classroom study. What is merely a matter of experience and common sense becomes thus elevated into the realm of scholarship, and is treated not as a convenient means to an end but as an end in itself. There is an inherent risk in promoting a subject from the strictly practical world to the higher sphere of theory, and in the rarefied atmosphere of the theoretic a subject so mundane as administration thrives poorly.



Of this risk we shall have something to say at a later stage. A third difference is the complaint that there is no philosophy of librarianship, no theoretic discipline on which technical studies can be based. This complaint has been repeated again and again by American writers during the last twenty years. Professional training, they say, must be grounded on an organised theory of librarianship, and until the fundamental principles of this theory are enunciated, training can never be effective.

It is noteworthy that these three differences of approach are most noticeable in the works of writers associated with American library schools. There is evidently much anxiety in the United States regarding the curriculum at these schools. They are under constant attack from all quarters. They are accused of being too practical, or not practical enough, too much engrossed in the details of routine, out of touch with reality, and neglectful of the progress of social science. In self-defence the school authorities strive to justify themselves. One suspects they are dimly aware that their scheme of librarianship is hollow and empty at the core ; that there is a gap which calls to be filled with something more solid and substantial than their curriculum can yet offer. They believe that this gap is waiting for a philosophy of librarianship which will raise the subject to a higher level of scholarship. This so-called philosophy of librarianship is however an elusive thing, as difficult to catch as any butterfly ; and despairing of its capture, they have thrust into the gap such insubstantial subjects as the theory of administration. This proving a poor makeweight, they seek to borrow additional substance from allied subjects such as social science and the science of statistics in order to fill out a too slender curriculum.

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These words are perhaps unfairly hard, for the problem of the curriculum in library schools is a real one, not to be dismissed lightly. If librarianship is a subject of academic significance it must possess a theoretic discipline of its own, and the search for such a discipline is legitimate. Let us enquire into this more closely, noting first the way in which the complaint is expressed.

K. D. Metcalf, writing of the library school curriculum, states "that there is no philosophy of librarianship to give point and depth to certain parts of the programme."<sup>1</sup>

Joseph L. Wheeler adds<sup>2</sup> that "until there is it is difficult to make clear the principles and purposes which underlie library functions. It should not be difficult for the teacher to present at the beginning of each course its purpose, history and its relation to other library subjects, to society and to cultural history. For lack of substantial studies and pertinent literature the situation as to a philosophy cannot be remedied overnight. Segments of present courses on the library and society, and on history of books and libraries might be incorporated with such material as the following: (1) The influence of books and libraries on the history of civilisation, by periods up to the present day. (2) The social penetration of the book; stressing the library's unique position at the centre of the currents set up by economic, social, civic, cultural, vocational, recreational and leisure groups. (3) The library and the citizen; current issues and events analysed as to major items which may be

<sup>1</sup> Metcalf, K. D., and others. *The program of instruction in library schools*. University of Illinois Press. 1943.

<sup>2</sup> Wheeler, J. L. *Progress and problems in education for librarianship*. Carnegie Corporation of New York. 1946.

reflected in demands or opportunities for library services. (4) The psychology of the reader; the influence of books on the lives of great men and on the ordinary reader. (5) The map of knowledge or 'the countries of the mind' as a factor in developing the library collection; the content of a hundred major subjects, their sequence as arranged by different criteria, and their significance and attractiveness as summarised in such introductions as Neilson's *Roads to knowledge*. The foregoing five subjects may or may not be considered components of a philosophy. Perhaps they are too practical. But until a philosophy has been formulated, they could throw a broader and brighter light on the purpose and value of books and libraries and give more point and depth and satisfaction to student endeavour."

Others write in similar vein. Carlton B. Joeckel observes<sup>1</sup> that "the librarian himself, always a pragmatist, has been much too busy doing things to take time for an objective view of himself and his works." Dr. J. Christian Bay says<sup>2</sup>: "You may hunt in vain through all our modern literature for any expression of the philosophic ideas by which our work should be supported." Professor Pierce Butler remarks<sup>3</sup>: "Among the learned professions, librarians and lawyers occupy a peculiar status. Both know very well how to do things, but both have only the vaguest notions of why they do them . . ." And again, "Until librarianship develops an adequate theory, its members must continue to be inarticulate, no matter how vociferous they may become." And further,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Library Journal*. 1932. LVII. 103.

<sup>2</sup> *A.L.A. Bulletin*. 1928. XXII. Sept.

<sup>3</sup> 1942. 7th Inst. for librarians. Chicago Graduate School.

<sup>4</sup> *Introduction to library science*. Chicago, 1933.

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"Unlike his colleagues in other fields of social activity, the librarian is strangely uninterested in the theoretical aspects of his profession." J. Periam Danton sums up all these feelings in an article<sup>1</sup> in which he makes a vigorous plea for a philosophy of librarianship. This is needed, he urges, precisely because scientific data to guide the student and the worker are lacking. Finally we may note that, of the seven objectives of the Graduate Library School at Chicago, outlined by Dean Wilson,<sup>2</sup> the first is the development of a theory or philosophy of library science. The second and third objectives provide for the formulation of guiding principles for each subdivision of library science, and for training students to carry out their library activities in accordance with the theories thus determined.

The emphasis on this aspect of librarianship may seem not a little strange to us in Great Britain. It would be hard to find any serious references in our own professional literature to the need for a philosophy of librarianship ; such a need has evidently not been felt in this country. And yet we cannot lightly disregard the urgency with which the problem is viewed by so many of the leaders of professional education in the United States. The difference in attitude between our two countries is striking, but there is a reason for it. It is not that we are by nature more pragmatic than our American friends, or that we are sceptical or contemptuous of philosophic enquiries. Rather the opposite : we have as a nation contributed more to modern philosophy than most other countries, the United States not excepted. This particular difference

<sup>1</sup> *Library Quarterly*. 1934. IV. 527.

<sup>2</sup> Chicago University. Graduate Library School. *New frontiers in librarianship*. 1941.

is simply explained by an accident of history. In Great Britain there was (until 1946) only one school of librarianship and this was founded in 1919. Its curriculum rightly or wrongly has never been a matter of public discussion, possibly because there were no competing schools with different programmes and methods. In the United States, on the other hand, there are thirty-four library schools, some dating back half a century, and all varying considerably in regard to curriculum and the type of student accepted. This situation naturally focusses attention on the methods adopted by the different schools, and on the varying emphasis accorded to the practical and theoretic aspects of training and to academic and non-academic subjects. The issue is thus a live one in the United States, as it has never been in Great Britain. Every American library school is rightly concerned with the justification of its particular method of instruction, and those which provide mainly for graduate students naturally strive to enhance the academic value of their curriculum. Each school has its own methods and its own standards; and though the schools must be accredited by the American Library Association, there is no specific national standard to which they must conform in regard to the content of their curriculum. To this we may add that in academic circles there is an uncomfortable suspicion that the existing curriculum is insecurely based, and requires underpinning by the addition of more scholarly foundations. Hence the search for some indisputable mark of scholarship such as might be conveyed by a philosophy of librarianship.

In this country the situation is different. Although the only university school of librarianship in Great Britain has been without competitors during its com-

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paratively brief existence of thirty years or so, it has never ignored the difficulties of planning the curriculum, and has been at pains to review and improve its syllabus on many occasions. If rivals have been lacking, critics nevertheless have not been silent, and no small part of the criticisms have come, especially in its earlier days, from those who thought that the School was too academic in character. The authorities of the School have never yielded to the plea that its syllabus should be made less academic and more practical ; there is indeed no true antithesis between the practical and the academic in this respect. At the same time they have never been led to search for any subject, whether philosophic or otherwise, to give substance to their curriculum. On the contrary they feel that there is already so much of academic value in the curriculum that it is often difficult to know how to fit it into the time available for the diploma course ; the problem therefore is what to exclude rather than what to add.

The opening of various new library schools at colleges of technology in England and Scotland in 1946 and 1947 is not likely to alter the situation. All these new schools are training students for the professional examinations of the Library Association, which provide a national standard of qualification to which the United States has no parallel. The Library Association's syllabus prior to 1946 was intended for part-time study, and the introduction of full-time training on a considerable scale made it necessary to revise it drastically. It is generally agreed that this revision has on the whole been successful, though the new library schools are naturally taking a critical and intelligent interest in its detailed provisions. Neither

the former syllabus nor the present one however contains any reference to the philosophy of librarianship, and so far as is known nobody has even commented on its absence. Most librarians would indeed feel that, while the new syllabus rightly demands a higher standard of scholarship than the old one, it has reached the limit of difficulty which is desirable in the circumstances ; it may need improvements in detail, but it requires no further weighting on the side of scholarship. This would be the common opinion in Great Britain today.

We may guess that as long as the system of professional education in this country remains as it is today there will be little interest in the philosophy of librarianship as a classroom subject, particularly if it is regarded as a new subject additional to the many which already burden the young librarians in Great Britain. No conclusion can however be drawn from this till we have enquired more closely into the meaning of the term. What exactly does it signify ? Is it perhaps used to describe something already present in our syllabus under a different name ? Or does it in fact cover something which is rightly or wrongly omitted in our own methods of training ? One thing is certain : so much importance is attached to it by our American colleagues that an English enquiry into its significance is not merely desirable but highly necessary.

## CHAPTER II

### A THEORETIC DISCIPLINE

*Om Fallash A3ad*

WHAT then have our American friends in mind when they call for a theoretic discipline? They are evidently thinking of something basic and fundamental, something on which the whole structure of librarianship rests; and an enquiry into its nature can rightly be regarded as an examination of the foundations of librarianship. It is equally evident that they are by no means certain what they are seeking. Every organised science, they say, has a theoretic discipline of its own, and therefore it should not be absent from librarianship. And yet nobody has yet identified it and described it, as in other sciences it has been mapped and described. It may, they say, be this or that or the other, if this or that are worthy of so high-sounding a title: will no one put on his thinking cap and build for us out of this or that a corpus of knowledge which we may reverence and canonise as the philosophy of our profession, a great system of principles to which we may anchor all the tangled web of our teaching and study? Is there no thinker among us who can salt the tail of this elusive bluebird?

When people set out on a quest of anything elusive, whether it be bluebird or buried treasure or philosopher's stone, and after much vain searching fail to track it down, our first instinct is to ask: Does it really exist anywhere except in the thoughts of the



seekers ? Or are they being led astray by a flickering will o' the wisp ? It would be easy to dismiss every light that shines through the darkness as a will o' the wisp, and to struggle blindly on. But when a guiding light has been glimpsed by so many of our leaders it is wise to investigate it ; even if it does not guide us to harbour it may warn us of dangers ahead.

We are, it is said, in search of something that is variously called a theoretical discipline or a philosophy of librarianship. Let us study the latter term first. Is there such a thing as a philosophy of librarianship ?

If the term "philosophy" is used in its strict, technical sense, the answer is "No ; there is not and never can be any such thing." The term "philosophy" is applicable only to those fields of thought and action which, in either their universal or individual aspects, can be regarded as departments of philosophy itself, and to those major branches of knowledge which have by nature definite philosophic affinities. These are, in the sphere of the theoretic, logic and the theory of knowledge, and æsthetics or the philosophy of art ; in the sphere of the practical, ethics and politics. To these may be added metaphysics and ontology, which study the science of being and questions of appearance and reality. These are the boundaries of the country of philosophy.

The term may also be legitimately used to cover the relations of philosophy with other subjects intimately connected in principle. Thus there is a true philosophy of science, because science is founded essentially on experimental and inductive knowledge, and no theory of knowledge is complete without a consideration of its scientific implications ; nor is any study of scientific method complete without a consideration of its

philosophic implications and its relationship to a *priori* thought. Of the various departments of science, the only one directly related to philosophy is mathematics, which is distinguished from all others by the abstract nature of its processes and by its affinities with systematic logic.

Then again there is a true philosophy of religion, because both revealed doctrine and a *priori* reasoning are concerned with the origin and purpose of the universe and with the springs of human activities and the motives of human conduct. There is possibly also a philosophy of history—the *storia della storiografia* of which Croce wrote. There are however no other relative philosophies, nor can there ever be, because in these the whole realm of thought and action is covered.

Those whose business it is to use the Dewey classification may indeed be led to think otherwise. They may argue that any subject under the sun can be treated from the angle of philosophy; the magic suffix "OI" is always available in D.C. for this purpose. There is however neither need nor excuse for using the word in this loose sense. There is perhaps one other subject in which the philosophic relation is often expressed, namely, education. But it is difficult to find a true basis for the term "philosophy of education." What is often intended by this term is in fact the psychology of education—a wholly different matter. Psychology is classed by Dewey under philosophy, and is indeed often taught as a subsidiary subject to philosophy. In reality however it is not a department of philosophy but the application of experimental science to the field of the mind: that is, mental science. It would be more appropriately

classed under medical science than under philosophy. It has relations with many other subjects besides education, and owing to the terminology of D.C. may sometimes be confused with true philosophy. There may for instance be a psychology of librarianship. If there is, it certainly has nothing to do with philosophy. The educated librarian may however be forgiven if he mistrusts the credentials of many of these relative psychologies (and relative philosophies). Too often the high-sounding term serves to cloak the woolliness of the thought which it represents.

We may therefore feel satisfied that there is no philosophy of librarianship in the true sense of the term. Is there an alternative sense in which the word might be used?

There are perhaps two or three other possible meanings. In earlier times "philosophy" stood for knowledge in general. Thus natural science was described as "natural philosophy." This meaning of the word is obviously not intended, for it adds nothing to the concept of the subject. In this sense, the philosophy of librarianship would simply be the study of librarianship in general.

The word is also used, mostly in an adjectival sense, to describe an attitude of lofty, unemotional calm. This popular adaptation (comparable to the misuse of the word "psychology" in the phrase "psychological moment") is certainly not applicable in the present case.

Finally there is the legitimate, but extremely loose, sense in which the word is used to describe the ruling principles of any branch of knowledge. These first principles will necessarily include a statement of the aims, object or end of this particular study. The word

does not often carry this significance in this country, but an examination of Dewey's classification scheme reveals that this is what he means when he attaches to his various headings the form division "philosophy, theory, etc." Thus 330.01 covers the general principles or canons which govern the whole science of economics ; and any work entitled "The principles of economics" might be classed under this number. This is the place for works which survey the subject as a whole, studying its relations to associated subjects, defining its special purpose and enumerating its starting point and general line of argument. This is not philosophy, but it is nevertheless a necessary approach to every subject ; and we may fairly conclude that it is what our American colleagues mean when they speak of the philosophy of librarianship.

If therefore we use the term in this sense, we can fairly ask (1) how is the term applicable to librarianship ? and (2) can it signify anything sufficiently solid to provide that theoretic discipline which the study of librarianship is said to need ?

It will be seen that there are in fact three slightly different meanings suggested, and we will consider them in turn.

*Principles.*—On examination it is found that the principles of a subject are usually nothing but the subject itself regarded as a unity. The principles of economics are simply the science of economics regarded as a whole. The principles of librarianship is a phrase that covers the whole field of librarianship. It is not a subject in librarianship ; it is librarianship itself. The word "principles" adds nothing new to the content of librarianship except the concept of unity which gathers all the various aspects of librarianship

together and considers them as a single coherent system. The term is applicable either to a discussion which is abstract, general and theoretic, or to a compendium which is comprehensive, concrete and particular. In the latter sense, Brown's *Manual of library economy* might well have been entitled *The principles of librarianship*, just as Mill's work was entitled *The principles of political economy*. In the former sense, there is no shortage of studies of the more general sort, though some are of an introductory and elementary nature. An example of the less elementary type is Wellard's *The public library comes of age*. No complaint can be made that such studies have not been attempted, though one can of course criticise the quality of the attempts that have been made.

It would seem obvious that any system of training in librarianship must include a general course covering the whole subject in principle. Librarianship is a composite subject ; how composite it is will be demonstrated in later chapters. Its complex character makes it all the more necessary for its component parts to be bound together by a unifying course such as this : a course which will help the student to realise that librarianship is one in essence, however diverse it may appear superficially. Such a course is indeed included in the syllabus at many library schools, for example at the Capetown school and at London University (where it is disguised in the regulations under the heading of "general administration"). Similar courses must indeed operate at most American schools. For example, the Carnegie Library School at Pittsburgh offers a course on administration which is described as "a general introduction to the various types of libraries, designed to orientate the student in the

field of librarianship and to evaluate the basic philosophy and current trends of modern library practice." The title of a course is admittedly no guide to its academic value, and it is always possible that a course (or book) on the principles of librarianship may fail to rise above the trivialities of elementary routine. If however it presents a comprehensive theory of librarianship, with a survey of the different subjects that go to build up the structure of librarianship, their relations to each other and to the whole, it will form a necessary foundation on which more specialised training can be based. This present work may, it is hoped, indicate one line of approach to a general survey of this type.

*Purpose of Librarianship.*—Any exposition of the principles of a subject must include a statement of its aim and purpose, and a definition of its scope. There is no mystery about the definition and purpose of librarianship, although there may perhaps be doubts about the boundaries of the field it covers. J. Periam Danton<sup>1</sup> offers the following definition: "Librarianship is that branch of learning which has to do with the recognition, collection, organisation, preservation and utilisation of graphic and printed records." This is comprehensive and includes everything essential, though there is room for debate as to the exact significance of the word "utilisation." Joseph L. Wheeler points out<sup>2</sup> that our ideas of the function and scope of librarianship are apt to change. "A definition made in 1900 (he says) or 1930 is not adequate today." Our conception of our task has never been in such a state of change and confusion, he thinks, as it is today,

<sup>1</sup> *Library Quarterly*. 1934. p. 528.

<sup>2</sup> *Progress and problems in education for librarianship*. 1946.

especially in regard to public libraries. He goes on to define librarianship as being concerned "primarily with books and other textual materials, their discovery, selection, preparation and, with increasing emphasis, their full utilisation by all classes and individuals who have the intelligence to learn and the gumption to seek information, recreation or self-development from them." He then lists four developments in librarianship which have been noted during the last twenty years. On examination, these prove to be not so much an extension of the field of librarianship, as a fuller appreciation of the nature of librarianship by both the profession and the public; and they can hardly therefore be said to alter the scope and definition of the subject. They are (1) the "functional use of books" (this mysterious phrase apparently means the use of books as sources of technical information); (2) growth in subject departmentation: this is obviously a development for the better, but it is nevertheless an internal development which does not affect the definition or purpose of librarianship; (3) scholarly research: if this were indeed a new development we should have to hide our heads for shame, but fortunately it is the *fons et origo* of all librarianship, though it may be veiled here and there by mists of popular taste; (4) adult education: here indeed is a new development in education, which must awaken a new response in librarianship. The last is one of the relationships with other subjects which we must presently discuss; the first three add nothing fresh to the concept of librarianship and cannot therefore affect its scope.

It is unlikely therefore that we can improve on the definition offered by J. Periam Danton. We may

however note two points about it. Librarianship (he says) is a branch of learning.<sup>1</sup> That is to say, it is not a craft or a technique based on clerical or manual dexterity. It is a department of scholarship, and must be recognised as such not only by those who use its services but by those who aspire to attain it for themselves. This indeed is the burden of this present book. Take away the kernel of scholarship and you are left with an empty shell. This fact being admitted, certain consequences follow logically. Any training institution, for example, which complains that its curriculum needs strengthening by the addition of subjects of solid academic value must be teaching in the main something other than true librarianship. If librarianship is a branch of learning, then presumably it has academic value in itself. There are of course degrees of value. It will be our task in a later chapter to consider whether in librarianship the value is substantial enough in itself to form an adequate basis for training, without extraneous support. Secondly, we note that the definition includes the utilisation of books as well as their preservation, and that there is room for doubt regarding the scope of this term. In academic and private institutions the functions of the library are limited by the special purposes for which it was established (e.g., research or teaching), and its aims and scope are clear. But in public libraries there is no such sharp definition of purpose, and study is needed therefore to delimit its objects and avoid trespassing on related fields. Teachers for example and publishers

<sup>1</sup> It is of course arguable that librarianship is not a branch of learning, but an administrative technique. In practice this is often true. Are we however to rest content with this lowly ideal? We are here concerned with what librarianship should be at its best, not with what in fact it is when judged by its least exacting standards.



are concerned with the utilisation of books, but they are not librarians. Similarly, librarians are neither teachers nor publishers, though they are intimately concerned with the work of both. No librarian could be satisfied with the mere provision of books for utilisation by others. Not only is he interested in seeing that they are used to the best advantage by the right people, but in providing an information service he must interpret and utilise books himself. The means he adopts for securing the right use of his books must vary in different types of public library ; the small popular library and the large reference library will use quite different methods. But every library, and in particular every public library, will have a definite programme of policy for the utilisation and (to use an expressive but ugly word) the exploitation of its resources. This will in effect be a programme of propaganda and publicity. Much of Dr. Savage's recent book<sup>1</sup> bears closely on this problem. Here we can content ourselves with saying (1) that we must beware lest we poach on other people's preserves, and (2) that our administrative machinery must be so designed that it does not obstruct the proper utilisation of our books ; the only object of such machinery should be to make the reader's task smooth and easy, but too often its complications succeed only in frightening him away.

*Relations with other subjects.*—This is a question which can rightly occupy a place in any "orientation" course. Too much must not however be made of it, for although we must obviously know where librarianship stands in relation to other subjects, it is fatally easy to wander into irrelevancies ; and in a necessarily

<sup>1</sup> *Manual of book classification and display.* 1946.

crowded curriculum irrelevancies are weeds which must be ruthlessly ejected.

The temptation to explore beyond the confines of our own territory is particularly strong in librarianship, because by nature it is related to every subject under the sun. Its business is to supply material in all conceivable fields of human knowledge. Thus the worker in a general library attempts the quite impossible feat of becoming superficially acquainted with every branch of knowledge. In a large library the hopelessness of this ideal is apparent, and the most practicable solution proves to be in the departmentalisation of the library, with each division under the care of subject specialists with recognised qualifications in their own sphere. There is indeed no other effective way of providing for the utilisation as well as the preservation of our material. Each subject department is therefore specially concerned with the relations between librarianship and its own subject; the peculiar needs of that subject are known and the department is so organised as to meet its requirements effectively. In the library school, training for this type of work must necessarily be limited to the general field, usually under some such heading as "reference library work." The specialist must add to this training in his own subject, preferably on the graduate level, together with practical work in the department of his choice.

The external relations of librarianship are consequently varied, and with the growth of subject departmentalisation much further study of this question is needed. Nevertheless, certain relationships stand out conspicuously, and may be briefly discussed here. These are in the main relations of principle rather than

of detailed routine. It may be noted that librarianship is concerned with people as readers as well as with books as objects to be read ; its task is the happy marriage of the right book to the right reader. Hence its general relations may be either with particular subjects as represented by books, or with particular types of people as requiring books.

*History.*—The relationship between librarianship and history is not often emphasised ; the affinity is so close however that a historian might be forgiven for claiming librarianship as a department of his own subject. Both use graphic and printed records as their basic material. By the definition we have adopted librarianship is concerned with the preservation and utilisation of such records. The task of history is briefly to interpret the records, wherever they can be found. In earlier times the historian was often perforce his own librarian, in the sense that he had to discover, arrange and organise his own material. Even today no library can supply all the records needed by the historian ; and it is sometimes precisely those records not available in libraries that are of most interest to the historian, and most likely to shed new light on previous interpretations of history. Nevertheless all great libraries contain stores of unexplored or imperfectly explored material of historical value, and all libraries are continually acquiring and arranging fresh material of this kind. Their duty is to discover it, arrange it and bring it to light for the historical scholar to use in his researches. This is what we mean when we say that the purpose of librarianship is to preserve and *utilise* graphic and printed records. Utilisation does not in this sense signify interpretation : that is the historian's work. It signifies the preparation of records for

interpretation by the historian, and covers their arrangement, calendaring and display in such a way as will meet the needs of the historian most conveniently. The fact that the acquisition and arrangement of records is impossible without at least their partial interpretation means that the librarian must be something much more than a storekeeper. He must be sufficiently a historian himself to understand the significance of the records that pass through his hands. He must know intimately the nature of the background against which the records were compiled. The historian himself however goes beyond this preliminary interpretation ; his concern is to select from a wide field records which are relevant to his special purpose, and by relating them to each other to draw inferences which reveal the progress of events in a new and truer light. Both the librarian and the historian must necessarily *select* their material ; the librarian selects from the point of view of general or probable historical value ; and the historian selects from the point of view of his special purpose. Hence the librarian's selection is never biassed, or at least the bias is reduced to a minimum. The historian's selection is always biassed, and rightly so. Not only does he survey the scene from his own individual viewpoint but his interpretation is limited by his particular purpose ; only so can he contribute something individual to the general view of history. The task of the librarian is therefore general ; that of the historian particular and individual.

It will have been noted that the librarian is concerned with graphic as well as printed records, that is, with documents of every type and form. The historical scholar is perhaps more interested in graphic than in printed records. Research takes him back always to

original sources, and many or most of his sources are in manuscript form. This is true even of contemporary sources, if we include typewritten documents as manuscripts. The historian is vitally interested therefore in the preservation of both mediæval and contemporary archives, for they are the real source of all history ; and their value is the greater since in general they are unique and irreplaceable. Quantities of original records have been lost beyond recall since man first put pen to paper. Quantities are still being lost through ignorance or carelessness, and through the recurring tragedy of war. Now by definition the central task of the librarian is preservation. This is his prime responsibility to the historian. The preservation of books is of limited importance, because printed books are duplicated everywhere, and in such circumstances selection must normally take precedence over preservation. The preservation of original records is however of vital importance, and this must cover contemporary as well as ancient documents of possible value to any branch of history, political, economic, legal or social. That this is the duty of libraries is plain. No sharp division can be made between original records in book form and those in documentary form ; and in any case historical research requires that books and archives should be preserved together in reasonable contiguity for easy reference. Every library, large and small, can contribute to this task of preservation, and in every district there should be one large library specially concerned with the preservation of local records. Provided that such libraries are equipped to carry out this task competently, this is a more effective arrangement than the creation of separate record repositories for the preservation of archive material.

Similarly every library school curriculum must include instruction in this branch of librarianship, with opportunity for specialisation by those students desiring to concentrate on this aspect of their work. In a great library divided into subject departments the history department would naturally be responsible for archive material. Or if there is a local history department in a general library, this would be the appropriate place for the preservation of records. The historical department of a library exists for the convenience of historical research, and bearing this in mind it is plainly wrong that archive material and printed books should be separated into compartments which are not merely watertight but far removed from each other. The relevance of this observation will be appreciated particularly in Great Britain, where the future constitution of archive authorities is now under discussion. Although certain municipal libraries in England are approved repositories for archive material, the record offices in the various counties are independent of any library, and there is in some quarters a feeling that all record offices should be reconstituted as autonomous authorities in districts of appropriate size. The resulting divorce of archive administration from librarianship would be unfortunate both for historical research and for librarianship. If the only means of avoiding this divorce is the reorganisation of libraries so that they are better equipped to act as archive repositories, then this reorganisation should be carried out.<sup>1</sup> Archive administration is a department of librarianship, and neither can benefit from a deed of separation.

<sup>1</sup> How this reorganisation might be carried out in Great Britain is discussed in the author's *National Library Service* (Grafton, 1947).

*Science.*—Librarianship is in the main a humanistic study, and as such is concerned with quality rather than quantity. This means that there is no special relationship between science and librarianship, other than the general relationship implied in the duty of the librarian to supply the scientist with the books and documents he needs. Not every librarian would however agree with this statement. Indeed Dr. Pierce Butler has devoted a whole book<sup>1</sup> to the proof of the opposite, and the organisation of the Graduate School at Chicago is largely based on this thesis. It is true that a quantitative element must of necessity enter into the study of any branch of knowledge or the practice of any art. Mathematical method can be applied to the study of such diverse subjects as music, economics and logic, though it can teach us nothing about the æsthetics of music, the qualitative life of the individual man or the metaphysical nature of thought. That is, it cannot guide us to the essence of these subjects. No branch of knowledge which is primarily concerned with the individual regarded as a living soul rather than a unit of society is susceptible to mathematical treatment. Librarianship is concerned not with books as units in a library, nor with readers as units of society, but with particular books in so far as they are needed by particular readers in given circumstances; and statistical research will prove an unreliable guide to this end. Statistics are of course necessary for the right conduct of any administrative system, but their value is limited to the consideration of the administrative machine, *qua* machine. Any piece of mechanism must be treated as mechanism; it must be costed, its operation must be watched and its standardised

<sup>1</sup> *An introduction to library science.* Chicago, 1933.

products must be recorded. But when a machine, administrative or otherwise, is designed to meet highly individual ends, its limitations must be accepted. No machine can produce anything but standardised goods, and when its products only achieve value in so far as they are adjusted to individual needs, statistical research gives no clue to the success with which those needs are being met ; that is to say, the true value of its work is beyond the scope of statistical enquiry. There is no relationship more individual than that of book and reader. The successful marriage of the right book to the right reader depends on so many factors which are not merely individual but in any given situation unique that the relationship is taken right outside the field of statistical treatment. This means that though the mechanical operations of a library can be recorded statistically (i.e., the number of readers or number of books issued regarded as units), the study of readers' tastes by this method is not a fruitful field for research. If literary tastes are regarded as units they lose all reality, for their reality depends wholly on the particular circumstances in which they are experienced by individuals. It is for this reason that most enquiries into readers' tastes succeed only in explaining by elaborate means what is perfectly obvious to any intelligent counter-assistant. Direct observation and ordinary common sense does not need supplementing by pseudo-scientific research.

Before we leave the relationship of science and librarianship we must note that just as the historian derives much of his material from graphic records (archives and inscriptions) so the scientist relies largely, not on books, but on periodicals and on abstracts and current information systematically



recorded, filed and indexed for his use. This goes by the awkward name of "documentation," and is as much a part of librarianship as archive administration. The needs of the scientist are highly specialised, and to meet them a race of specialised workers known as "information officers" has sprung up. There is no justification for regarding information work as anything but a department of librarianship, and training in librarianship must embrace both this and archive work. Both fall within the definition of librarianship, and both must come within the fold.

*Social Science.*—Much of what we have said about science can be said also of social science. The scientific method is now commonly applied to questions of economics, and is valid in so far as it can deal with human beings as units. As librarianship is commonly regarded as a social service, the temptation to extend the method of social surveys to the field of librarianship is both understandable and dangerous; dangerous, because the reader is thereby regarded as a unit divorced from the particular environment which constitutes his individuality. Conclusions based on social surveys are only valid if the limitations of the method are accepted; and in librarianship the limitations are so severe that the significance of the conclusions is largely dissipated. They either restate the obvious or else they convey impressions which are misleading. This is true of other fields than librarianship. The social survey of a given geographical area may be of economic value if it is complete (i.e., not deduced from averages or cross-sections) and if the enquiry is directed to particular ends such as housing, land utilisation or occupations which are amenable to statistical treatment. Its limitations are more pronounced if it is

directed to problems such as the level of incomes, or of nutrition, which are governed by private and individual factors. One of the most fruitful fields of statistical enquiry concerns the problems of population, because not only can they be treated exhaustively but they can be restricted to facts about individuals regarded as units of society. A carefully made census reveals valuable facts about the population of a country, the numbers in different age-groups, and other categories, with details about marriages and the birth of children, etc., for which the individual is significant only as a unit. Statistics of health, disease and death are of value for a similar reason. But when statistics are applied to fields in which individuality is the dominant factor, when moreover they are based on averages, then their value is severely limited and often deceptive. Conclusions based on mass observation or polls, however "scientifically" they may be conducted, are always suspect. And it is precisely this latter type of enquiry with which librarianship is most commonly associated. It cannot be emphasised too plainly that librarianship is an individual service, concerned with individual needs. Any statistical operation which divides readers into categories according to tastes, needs, occupations and ages, *may* have a strictly limited value for administrative purposes ; but such a classification can only be made at the sacrifice of their reality as individual readers. Classified, grouped and arranged, they are abstractions ; treated individually, they are human beings with real needs of their own. The danger of relying on mechanical devices such as punch-card systems is that readers or books come to be treated as groups of units, and the library becomes an automatic machine. The

end of librarianship is only achieved when each reader and each book is treated as a living and unique individual.

It is common for the subject of civics to be included in the curriculum of the American library school. There is no justification for this. Every librarian (and indeed every intelligent citizen) should know something of the responsibilities of citizenship, but this is a matter of general education rather than of technical librarianship. The fact that many libraries are managed by public authorities means that the relationship of the library to the local or central government must be studied, but apart from this there is no special association between civics and librarianship to warrant its isolation as a subject of study.

*Education.*—The interest of the librarian in social science in general is in the main an extension of his natural interest in education. Here there is an undeniable relationship, and the boundaries of each sphere must be defined. What is education? There are many elaborate definitions, but the basic meaning of the word is "instruction," whether self-instruction or instruction by others. This is obviously not the province of the librarian, whose concern is with the provision of some of the tools of teaching, not with teaching itself. If librarians have sometimes been tempted to stray into the sphere of teaching this has usually been because the education authorities have not been awake to their responsibilities. This applies particularly to the field of adult education. In the absence of an organised service of adult education, such as is now provided in England and Wales, it is understandable that libraries should venture into this field on their own account, particularly as adult

education is often of the informal type rather than the formal. We must however lay down the general principle that education of any kind (other than education in librarianship and in the use of libraries) is outside the scope of the librarian.

Nor is the librarian concerned with the provision of all the tools (i.e., the graphic or printed records) needed by the teacher. Material needed for direct class teaching and for examination purposes it is the duty of the education authority to supply or of the student to buy. This includes not merely "set books" and text-books required for class teaching, but illustrative material such as gramophone records, maps and facsimiles. The only librarian who need concern himself with this type of material is the librarian of an education authority's own library, and it would be excellent if every education authority employed a trained librarian to handle such material. Students in general must not rely on any ordinary lending or reference library for the supply of any material in this category. They must indeed realise that they cannot derive full benefit from the majority of their text-books unless they obtain copies of their own ; that is, they must have their own private library of essential books.

The responsibility of the library lies in the provision of background material required not by the class as a whole but by individual students, to illustrate their work and to fill the gaps in their organised tuition. This covers in general the type of book which the student can safely borrow rather than buy, as it is not wanted for reference throughout his course. In point of fact no sharp division can be drawn between the text-book and the "background book." What may be a text-book for one student may be merely illus-

trative material for a student following a different course. Or again, "amateur students" following short courses in adult classes may legitimately borrow books which the full-time student would need to buy. Hence most libraries include certain books which might fairly be classed as text-books. Nevertheless the temptation of the genuine student to rely on borrowing such books should be resisted. It is unfair both to himself and to the library.

It is not the duty of the library to provide lecture rooms in which classes can meet. This is the responsibility of the education authority. It may however be appropriate for the general library to provide accommodation for discussion groups, play-reading groups and the like, because this type of activity is so informal as to have little connection with organised education. Plays, concerts and general lecture courses are strictly speaking outside the province of the library.

Admitting all this, it is right and proper that the librarian should not be content with the mere delivery of material into the hands of the readers, but should be anxious to ensure that it is the right material for the purpose, and is used rightly. This is the justification for all the apparatus of publicity and display and individual guidance with which the librarian "exploits" his stock. This also means that the librarian must to some extent be able to penetrate the insides of his books and evaluate and interpret them in general terms. To this extent, and no further, do librarianship and education overlap; and on inspection it proves a substantial overlap, for the provision of such material for the student is a vital factor in education, and its evaluation implies a knowledge not merely of the material itself but of the scope and

purpose of the educational courses for which it is required. This is indeed an onerous responsibility. To those who say that it is demanding the impossible, we reply that intelligent librarianship *must* include the evaluation of the material with which it deals. The technical processes of book selection, classification and cataloguing necessitate this, and it is reasonable to expect that the knowledge so gained should be available for the benefit of the reader. In this we do not trespass on the field of the specialist or the tutor. His duty is to cover his whole subject in detail and with authority. Ours is to provide signposts and maps to the traveller, particularly to the student who is journeying alone. We do not lead him by hand to his goal ; but we cannot give him his best route unless we know where the various paths will take him and what he will meet by the way.

We may conclude from this that librarianship and education cover different, though slightly overlapping, fields. In a country where the education service is fully organised there is no need for either to trespass on the property of the other. They are sister services of equal status ; each is necessary to the other, and neither is subservient. It is important that both sides should appreciate the nature of this relationship. We have mentioned the temptation of librarians to stray into the field of education. There is a similar temptation for educationalists to embrace and absorb librarianship, making it a minor department of their own sphere. This can only be because the educationalist does not realise the complexities and responsibilities of this highly specialised branch of knowledge. We shall do well to see that this temptation is heartily resisted on both sides.

*Literature.*—The relationship between librarianship and literature is hard to define. Under this heading we must include all graphic and printed records whose value is largely imaginative or æsthetic, rather than factual and informative. In many libraries, especially popular libraries, this would cover a very large proportion of the library stock. It may be taken as axiomatic that librarianship has a responsibility to literature for the maintenance of a due standard of taste, and indirectly for the encouragement of creative work. This is presumably one reason why the Library Association includes English literature in its syllabus. Another reason doubtless is the very close affinity between historical bibliography and literary history : so close that the literary student must also be a bibliographer, and the bibliographer must be a student of literature. The University of London School requires English literature in the two-year non-graduate course only. From one point of view, literature is the only non-technical subject in the L.A. syllabus, and as candidates are supposed to have completed their general education before sitting it may be wondered how its place in the technical examinations is justified. True, the educated citizen is supposed to have a knowledge of his own literature; and this being so, *a fortiori* the librarian must have at least an equal grounding. The real justification however is that both literature and librarianship deal in the main with books, and to this extent the field is common to both. Literary history as the term is generally used covers much besides strictly imaginative literature. All books of standing come within its scope—the great works of science, history and politics as well as the creative works of drama, poetry and fiction. The literary student may view them in the main from

the æsthetic angle ; he may pay special regard to their place in literary history and their relationship to other works of the same age or period. But he cannot overlook their importance in their own right, or fail to make judgments, however tentative, as to their scientific or historical value. In this sense the librarian must quite obviously be a genuine student of literature, and this subject is rightly included in his training. We can however note that the librarianship student must approach literature from a special angle. An honours degree in English is an excellent introduction to professional training for the English librarian, but no more excellent than a degree in history or science. The librarianship student in addition needs something quite different to the ordinary degree course, and this is probably true of both graduate and non-graduate students. Further study is needed to work out a programme for this, but it may be concentrated first on the bibliographical aspect of literature and secondly on questions of appreciation and criticism, and it may cover either literature in general or a variety of specialised alternatives such as the literature of economics or science. This type of course would be of value even to an English honours graduate, if room could be found for it in the syllabus.

There are two points on which more must be said. Library text-books sometimes stress the principle that in the recording of books the librarian must preserve an impartial attitude and refrain from expressing critical judgments regarding their contents. This may be true as regards formal cataloguing, for which only brief annotations of an explanatory type are required. But a little reflection will show that most of the technical processes of librarianship are impossible without a



critical evaluation of the books with which the librarian is dealing. This is true of book selection ; it is true of the preparation of book lists, subject guides and bibliographies ; it is true of the personal guidance offered to individual readers ; it is true to a great extent even of classification. This means that the good librarian must be capable of making literary judgments of the value of his books. He must be able to evaluate them critically. Strictly speaking, his judgments are limited to their value as books ; that is, he is not directly concerned with the validity of their subject-matter, considered in the abstract. But in practice the two types of judgment cannot be dissociated ; a critical view of the book *qua* book carries with it inevitably a critical view of its treatment of the subject. There is however this distinction : that though the librarian must be a critic, he must not be a missionary. His judgment must be as dispassionate as that of any court of law, and he must never allow it to wear the appearance of propaganda ; his task is not to attack or defend but to appraise and evaluate. If this is accepted, the training of the young librarian in literary criticism and appreciation requires no further justification. How such a training can best be given needs careful thought.

A second point is worth notice. Assuming the responsibility of the librarian towards the maintenance of literary standards, to what extent is he to allow popular demand to depress his standards ? This is a question that mainly affects the popular library ; in the learned library accuracy and quality override other considerations. A strong case can undoubtedly be made out for the exclusion of sub-standard books in the literary classes, e.g., popular fiction of poor

quality. Nevertheless, there is no absolute standard of literary value, or if there is it is all but impossible to define it. This means that standards are relative to current tastes and cannot be fixed without reference to the educational level of the users of the library. It seems reasonable that the standard chosen should be slightly higher than the average level of intelligence of the readers, and that it should be elastic rather than rigid. No one can however escape the conclusion that British popular libraries contain far too high a proportion of sub-standard books, and that a general raising of the standard is desirable.

*Philosophy.*—Something has already been said earlier in this chapter about the relation of librarianship to philosophy. The relation between library classification and logical classification will be discussed in a later chapter.

Under the heading of philosophy some reference must be made to psychology and to ethics.

Psychology is occasionally applied to certain aspects of librarianship, such as the approach to readers and the appointment of staff. Its use in this context should be viewed with extreme suspicion. Strictly speaking psychology is the science of the mind and of behaviour. As such it has claims to a place in philosophy and in the sciences of medicine and education. Before good use can be made of it a lengthy period of training is needed—certainly as long as is required for the practice of medicine. In more popular usage however it is at the best a high-sounding term for what can be better described as intelligent common sense; and at the worst it is pseudo-scientific nonsense. It is in this more popular sense that it is sometimes applied to practical arts such as salesmanship; and we must

beware lest we waste our time in librarianship over anything so spurious. It is probably unwise to regard the psychology of librarianship as a separate subject of training. The greater part of it is a matter of plain common sense ; and we can rightly expect entrants to the profession to be already equipped in this respect. The remainder consists of details of administration and technique which the student should pick up in the normal course of training. All this applies equally to the inclusion of child psychology in the training of children's librarians. Child psychology as it is usually interpreted is a transparent mixture of rubbish and common sense, and we cannot afford it a place in the curriculum. There are so many valuable things that are essential to any course in librarianship that we cannot spare the time for fancy superficialities that contribute nothing to the quality of the student.

Ethics is related to librarianship in the solution of certain problems regarding book selection. It is an axiom that the librarian should be impartial in the face of questions of politics, ethics and religion which divide his readers. His policy is to allow each side of every question to state its case to his readers without favour ; for only by knowledge of both pros and cons can a balanced judgment be reached. This is the democratic ideal ; there is no concealment, no censorship of the opponent's arguments. But what we have already said about literary criticism applies equally here. The librarian is acting in a judicial capacity, holding the ring to ensure fair play. He cannot be indifferent to reason, and he must be critical of every theory and every argument that appears in print, for criticism is inherent in the technical processes of his work. But his evaluation of

both books and the theories they represent must be related to current tastes and to the temperament of his readers. Thus in a general library the librarian may rightly distinguish between (a) issues with a definite standing, each side having an accepted literature of its own, and (b) issues raised by small minorities but ignored by the populace as a whole. Of the first class an illustration would be the issue between capitalism and communism ; each side would be fairly represented by the best books its protagonists have produced. The second class covers questions raised by what the average man regards as "fads" or "cranks." Such questions are often not important enough to have drawn a reasoned criticism from the opposite side, and for this reason cannot be fairly balanced on the shelves. As illustrations of this type of issue the questions of vivisection, pacifism or spiritualism might be cited. In such cases the librarian must decide to what extent such issues must be admitted ; and the task is not always easy.

Book selection implies book rejection : selection of the good and rejection of the bad. It is wise to emphasise however that book selection rests on the inclusion of books of value rather than the exclusion or censorship of books that are not desired. If book selection is regarded as a positive and constructive process, it can be more easily justified than if attention is focussed on the negative aspect of censorship. This is the most fruitful method of solving the thorny problems which must inevitably arise in dealing with minority theories.

Let us summarise this chapter. The term "philosophy of librarianship" has no meaning other than the study of the theory or principles of this branch of

knowledge. Such a study must include (*a*) a definition of librarianship, (*b*) a statement of its purpose and aims and (*c*) a statement of its relations with other branches of knowledge. Each of these have been considered briefly, and the relationship between librarianship and various subjects such as science, literature, education and philosophy has been discussed. To complete this study of our first principles, we must enquire more closely into what librarianship in all its various aspects really is. That is to say, we must amplify the definition on which we have agreed and see where it leads us.

## CHAPTER III

### THEORY AND PRACTICE

BEFORE we proceed to a discussion of the nature and content of librarianship it may be wise if we pause to consider a problem which confuses many arguments about professional training. This is the relative importance to be attached to practice and theory in any course of technical instruction. Part of the difficulty is due to the fact that the word "theory" has several slightly different meanings.

In its strict sense theory (or the theoretic) is the logical and rational aspect of human activity. On the other hand the practical is the sphere in which the will operates. These two aspects of human life are as interdependent as the two swings of a pendulum; the one is unthinkable without the other. Thought (i.e., the theoretic) issues naturally into action; indeed it is incomplete without it. Similarly the practical must be based on logical theory. Abstract the theoretic element from human action and you are left with nothing but the inherited behaviour patterns and reflexes of the animal. All the essential characteristics that differentiate the human being from the animal are summed up in the theoretic-practical process, consisting of organised thought developing into directed action. Pure theory is as much an abstraction as pure practice; the practical is its necessary application. It is true that theory may seem to avoid application by

turning in on itself introspectively, provided its object is theoretic, although even then it cannot avoid the practical expression of the thoughts involved in it. Nevertheless any study of knowledge for its own sake, as for example in pure science or pure mathematics, is an abstraction. Any study of *practical* knowledge which has an object beyond its own self is not merely an abstraction unless applied ; it is an abstraction without meaning or relevance.

The ordinary Englishman is naturally suspicious of logic, and prefers to rely on what he terms practical experience. This feeling rests on a false dichotomy. It is really a preference for one logical basis rather than another, for you cannot escape the theoretic aspect of human life however suspicious you are of it. We have already discussed at some length the phrase " theory of librarianship " and have found it to mean the governing principles of the subject, or the subject itself, considered as a unity. There is no significance in the term unless the principles are applied, or capable of being applied, in practice, nor can there be anything coherent and systematic about the practice unless it is based on a reasoned theory. The principles of a practical subject are precisely the principles of its application, and they can only be learnt by applying them. Thus any course of instruction in such a subject must be essentially practical ; it must be instruction in the application of the governing principles.

Now the practical application of a subject is of two kinds, according to whether the theory to be applied relates to facts or to practical methods. Historical knowledge for example deals with the interpretation of facts, and is applied by adjusting the interpretation to known circumstances in such a way that the situation

as a whole forms a coherent system. On the other hand, theories of method can only be applied by putting the method into practice and testing it out under various conditions. The knowledge to be acquired in any branch of practical learning such as librarianship is partly factual or historical and partly knowledge of methods. Methods themselves must be divided into (a) those which are in the main illustrative, and (b) those which are actually practised in librarianship. Bibliography furnishes examples of each of these. Study of the development of printing is largely historical and factual in character. The study of processes of reproduction is a study of methods undertaken to illustrate the history of the printed book ; the librarian is not himself required to make woodcuts or engravings, and it is sufficient therefore if he applies this knowledge factually, i.e., relates it to the rest of his knowledge of the printed book. The study of methods of bibliographical description is, on the other hand, a study of a task which is essentially a part of librarianship, and can only be learnt by actual practice on given books. The successful course of instruction will make allowance for these differences, and in so doing will show itself to be a genuinely practical course in the true sense of the word. Since the object towards which all the instruction is directed is the practice of librarianship, the complete application and justification of the theoretic course as a whole must be deferred till the student has finished his formal studies and started in practice himself. It is then that he applies in earnest the principles he has learnt during his period of instruction ; indeed he spends the rest of his working life revising these principles in the light of new experience and applying and



re-applying them. Although his experiments in practical application must begin with the beginning of his training, and must permeate every phase of his course, nevertheless the course must necessarily appear predominantly theoretic ; that is, the student will build up as it were a store of theoretic knowledge which in the time available he can only test and apply imperfectly and in part. This is true of any course of training for two reasons : first because the length of such a course must normally be limited to a year or two at the most ; and secondly because to a large extent the full practical application of general principles must await maturity of thought and experience.

The word "theory" often has a second and slightly different meaning. It is commonly used of an unverified hypothesis. The discovery of new knowledge proceeds by the method of trial and error ; that is, by the propounding of a theory which before acceptance must be verified and tested against known facts. If it works (as we say) in practice, we accept it as established. If not, we adjust it and revise it till it does, or we may withdraw it altogether. The process of verification may often be very protracted. Sometimes a theory may be tested out quickly ; occasionally a completely satisfactory verification may be almost impossible, at least without greater expense than can be justified. A theory of facts requires to be tested against known or ascertainable facts ; a theory of method requires testing by putting the method into practice under fair conditions. In the intervening period before verification is complete the theory is held in suspense ; it is an unchecked hypothesis which may or may not be valid.

The acceptance of an unverified hypothesis as a

proved theory is a common source of error which may vitiate any argument or discussion. Examples are frequent when amateurs invade the field of experimental science. Good illustrations may be found in the works of Bernard Acworth, a sailor by profession, who in *This bondage* (1930), *The cuckoo and other bird mysteries* (1944) and *Butterfly miracles and mysteries* (1947) puts forward a selection of intriguing but questionable theories on matters of natural history, notably on bird migration, the origin of coloration in butterflies and the behaviour of parasitic cuckoos. It is noteworthy that the only one of his theories which trained scientists have viewed without disrespect is a theory regarding the effect of wind on the flight of birds, based directly on his own experience of navigation at sea. Here he was on firm ground and knew his facts. Elsewhere he was unable to ensure that his suggestions fitted in with known and established facts. On the other hand, there are abundant examples of theories (or hypotheses) which have been satisfactorily established. F. Fraser Darling in 1938 advanced a theory of social stimulation as a factor leading to successful breeding conditions in colony-nesting birds. This theory was based on a study of herring gulls in the Summer Isles. It was a new theory at the time, but on the facts presented it appeared highly probable that Darling was right. Since that date the hypothesis has been verified by other observers in regard to gannets, fulmars and other colony-nesting birds, and the theory is now accepted as proved. Occasionally theories are at first rejected because they do not fit in with known facts, and then later find acceptance when it is realised that the error lay in the so-called facts and not the theory; this occurred notably with Galileo and Darwin. In the

sphere of librarianship new theories relate mostly to organisation and methods, and these can only be verified by practice. For example, the proposal to establish a central cataloguing agency in London could be justified by experiment. Since however the experiment would be costly and complicated, it is not likely to be attempted unless success is reasonably certain. In such a case success generally depends on the co-operation and goodwill of all who are to share in the scheme, and without this a full-scale experiment would not be worth attempting. Other examples could be found in the various schemes of library classification. The only test of these is the pragmatic one: do they work well in practice? The D.C. scheme, which was based on an *a priori* theory of logical arrangement, has been undergoing this practical test for over a generation; many think it has failed to stand up to the test with any conspicuous success. The L.C. scheme, which was designed to meet the day-to-day needs of a great and expanding library and has therefore been under test from the start, is for this reason more likely to satisfy the practical requirements of other libraries. Other schemes such as that of Bliss, though they seem logically attractive, must await adequate practical tests before they can be finally judged.

Still another meaning of the word "theory" is found in its use to describe a more or less loosely held opinion which may or may not be upheld in practice. Politicians for example have been heard to aver that they are republican in theory though monarchist so far as this country is concerned today. Or an outward profession of agnosticism may not prevent a man from praying devoutly in private, particularly in a time of

crisis. The use of the word "theory" for an unverified hypothesis or for an insecurely based opinion has tended to bring it into discredit ; it becomes associated with notions that seem fine at first hearing, but cannot stand up to any practical test. A little reflection will show that in discussing the theoretic and practical aspects of education, we are not using the word in the sense of either hypothesis or opinion, but in our first sense, that is, as the logical basis of all practical action. Those who are suspicious of what they call "theory" presumably derive their suspicions from the other associations of the term. Or again such suspicions may be due, and often are due, to sheer mental laziness ; that is, an unwillingness to accept the fact that practice must be grounded on organised thought. It is true that every hypothesis must be verified in practice. It is equally true that all practice must be verified in, or based on, organised thought. If we cast doubts on the value of the theoretic basis of education, we are doubting the value of rational thought as the basis of human action.

It should be evident that any course of instruction in a branch of learning such as librarianship must be theoretic throughout, though it must be fully applied in practice. A particular course may be legitimately criticised because either the theory or the practice is bad (though one must know the teaching fairly intimately to be able to justify such a criticism), but it cannot be criticised simply because it rests on theory.

There is one alternative to theoretic instruction, and that is instruction by imitation. Imitation is a simple method of acquiring disjointed physical routines and behaviour patterns. In human beings it is rarely, even at the lowest levels, divorced entirely from some slight

theoretic element, but its dependence on theory is reduced to a minimum. It is a common foundation for the simpler forms of manual skill. In essence it is a partly instinctive process which short-circuits the task of learning; theoretic aspects are overlooked and separate patterns of activity are repeated piecemeal without appreciation of their relations or of the purpose and scope of the whole. It is for this reason mainly limited to repetition work and other activities which can be crystallised into fixed routines. Any art so acquired, though it may be highly skilled, is to that extent blind and unseeing. Thus a carpenter's son may learn his trade largely by imitating his father's skill, and may himself in due course acquire great skill of his own. Even so however he will not become a craftsman in his own right unless he picks up the theory of his work, its guiding principles, its possibilities and limitations. For there is a theory of carpentry as there is of every human activity. Pip in *Great expectations* spoke correctly when he said of Biddy that "theoretically she was already as good a blacksmith as I." Biddy knew the rules and principles of the work, though she had never tried to apply them. Doubtless that means very little in the craft of the smith or carpenter, but it indicates that the theoretic element is there. Biddy's responsibilities lay not in the work of the smithy, but in the task of looking after Joe the blacksmith, and this involved some theoretic knowledge of Joe's work which was applied in her care for his welfare. Similarly a librarian's work involves some theoretic knowledge of, say, the art of the wood engraver, and this is applied not in engraving but in the care of books which may include engravings.

As we pass to activities which are primarily intel-

lectual, the importance of the theoretic element grows and the scope for imitative learning decreases. Stereotyped routines sink into the background, and initiative and intellectual appreciation of the subject take their place. There are a few stereotyped routines associated with librarianship, but these are the least important part of it, and they figure hardly at all in any course of theoretic instruction. The intelligent student who has grasped the significance of librarianship as a whole will have no difficulty in picking up such routines as are necessary in the course of practical experience ; and he will do this the more speedily because he will learn them not by blind imitation, but by an appreciation of the reason for them and of their place in the general scheme of things. The good system of training concerns itself comparatively little therefore with practical routines, except so far as these are needed to illustrate general principles ; and any course or syllabus may be legitimately condemned if these are over emphasised.

Those who have experience of teaching will know that it is impossible to separate a course of training into given proportions of practical and theoretic work. The most we can do is to insist that the final end and purpose of the course is practical librarianship ; that all theoretic instruction should be applied to this end ; and that instruction in technical methods (e.g., of cataloguing, classification or bibliographical research) should be given by practical work—this being indeed the only way in which they can be learnt at all.

At the London School it is customary to expect students to spend three weeks of their course in three libraries of different types. This is too short a period to provide practical experience of much value, though

it is as much as can be spared out of a single year's course. It does serve however to illustrate some of the theoretical instruction, to bring the student down to earth as it were, and show him at first hand a few of the actual problems with which libraries are faced in their daily work. Visits to libraries are always of value, but a week spent in the day-to-day tasks of librarianship is of far greater illustrative value, especially when carried out under the intelligent and sympathetic guidance of the staff. The University of London withholds the award of its diploma to students who succeed in the examination till they have completed one year's work in a full-time salaried post in an approved library. This also is a wise provision. The year's service may be undertaken either before or after the course. Although logically theory precedes practice, some prior experience of library routine makes it possible for the student to derive greater benefit from his theoretic instruction. He comes to the School already familiar, so to speak, with the language of librarianship; he knows its technical terms and has a rough idea of the scope of the subject, thus enabling him to get straight ahead with his studies. The prescribed year's service has the further object of emphasising that the examination is not by itself a sufficient qualification; the student must in addition be able to hold down a post satisfactorily in a library of standing. This means that personality counts as well as technical ability, and while the latter can be tested in the examination room, the former can best be judged in actual service.

Is there any reasonable alternative to this type of theoretic-practical instruction? Some critics suggest that apprenticeship in a library is a better method.

In what library? The critic usually means, in a public library. This will give the apprentice a first-hand acquaintance with the routine of that particular library, which is probably different from the routine of other public libraries and certainly is wholly different from the routine of university or special libraries. If the object is to train an apprentice who will have the special routine of that library at his finger-ends, but will be bound to that library for life by his own inexperience of the larger world, then that object may indeed be achieved. This narrow aim is unworthy of librarianship, nor will it produce the great librarians of tomorrow. Those who advocate apprenticeship-training forget how diverse and complex is the field of librarianship. What can they know of libraries whose horizons are thus limited? The immense variety of libraries raises many difficult problems in training, but it is one obvious advantage of the library school that it can give the student a picture of librarianship as a whole, its farthest boundaries and its manifold types—a far clearer picture than can be obtained from apprenticeship in a single institution. Not only will the student learn the geography, so to say, of librarianship, but he will meet and exchange experiences with workers in every type of library and with fellow students, often from many different countries, journeying towards every possible kind of bibliographical goal. In no other way can the student learn his way about the country of librarianship so surely and so easily, or build for himself a background of experience against which his specialised training can be fitted in due perspective. We may observe also that the argument in favour of apprenticeship-training is not an argument against theoretic



teaching in general. The apprentice will still have to pick up his theory in the library where he works, though in a much more laborious and disconnected way and at greater cost to himself in time and energy. The brilliant apprentice will achieve this—but how much more successful he would have been if he had been able to give himself a better start!

This interlude on theory and practice will not have been wasted if it has led us to a better appreciation of the meaning of these terms. Let me conclude this chapter by noting that librarianship (like all work to which men can lose their hearts) is something far richer than a bread-and-butter task. It is a way of life. Those of us who work in library schools are very conscious of this. Our responsibility is to guide the young student into an appreciation of this truth. The examination at the end of the course is an incident only—a minor though necessary feature of the process. Our high concern is not to get people through their examination but to plant in them the germ of librarianship which will grow and blossom in later years; the vigour of the plant in the years to come matters far more than the examination test next June. Nobody will deny that apprenticeship-training at its rare best may implant equal vigour and equal joy in librarianship for its own sake. But apprenticeship-training combined with the qualifying test of external examinations is calculated to damp the ardour of all but the most brilliant young librarians. Too often the goal then becomes the final examination, after which all text-books are thrust aside and the ears are shut and the eyes are closed and the brain sinks to slumber. In the academic school which controls (as such a school should) its own examination system there is at

least a faith in the intrinsic value of librarianship as a way of life and the hope that the examinations will be set in perspective against that faith and that the student will learn to look beyond them towards a greater goal. The apprentice in a great library may achieve this wider vision if he is not tethered by the hind leg to a chain of external examinations ; unfortunately great libraries are few, and great librarians fewer. The student in the school may achieve it, and indeed will, if there is any faith and fire within him at all. The part-time student labouring through a correspondence course, poor soul, will find his horizon bounded by the crisis of the next examination. Rarely is the divine fire communicated by postal tuition in instalments ; the examination is the goal, and in preparation for it the unhappy student must be crammed to the point of indigestion. The goal is in due course achieved, after maybe three or four failures and three or four more indigestible meals ; and that done, the exhausted student rids his overloaded mind of food no longer needed and turns with relief to easier paths. His goal is admission to the inner professional circle—why bother further when this is won ? The more fortunate, the happier ones, are seeking by different ways a different goal ; and in very truth how infinitely more fortunate they are !

## CHAPTER IV

### APPLIED BIBLIOGRAPHY

OUR next task is to examine the nature of librarianship, and to enquire whether we are justified in regarding it as a subject of academic value. Can it rank with other subjects which are commonly taught at universities? Is there sufficient substance in it to warrant the setting up of university schools devoted to its teaching? Can it fruitfully occupy an academic course lasting a year or more?

We can answer these questions best by surveying in detail the map of librarianship, thus finding out exactly what it has to offer. First let us remind ourselves of the definition of librarianship which we adopted in an earlier chapter: "Librarianship is that branch of learning which has to do with the recognition, collection, organisation, preservation and utilisation of graphic and printed records." This is our subject, and this is what we aim to teach at library schools.

What is this in a single word? Surely the answer is *bibliography*. Bibliography indeed is the alpha and omega of all that is comprised in our definition. And we use the term bibliography in its widest sense. Bibliography is the study of the book throughout its life, from its earliest beginnings with the author's manuscript, the compositor's type and the binder's tools, to its climax and to the achievement of its final goal in the scholar's study, on the library bookshelf

or by the fireside at home. Everything connected with the making of the book from its birth to its final decease, and with the rendering of it accessible to the student, is the proper study of both the bibliographer and of the librarian. The dictionary definition of "bibliography" reads: "The study or account of the history of books from the external side as distinct from their subject matter; description of the making up of books, the various editions and impressions and the differences which distinguish these." (H. C. Wyld). Esdaile in his *Student's manual of bibliography* says: "Bibliography is an art and also a science. The art is that of recording books; the science, necessary to it, is that of the making of books and of their extant record." These definitions can quite legitimately be extended to cover the whole of our subject, and they can be accepted with this reservation that, while the distinction between the external side of books and their subject matter must properly be made, yet the external side cannot be studied without account being taken of their contents. Nevertheless, our approach to the contents of, say, a work of history is always that of a bibliographer or librarian, not that of a historian; the difference is important.

We must distinguish also between the interests of the bibliophile and the librarian, and with this end in view we shall do well to regard the subject of librarianship as *applied bibliography*, reserving pure bibliography for the field of book collecting. The terms "pure" and "applied" are here used loosely, and not in their strict philosophical sense. Pure bibliography may not be technically an abstract study as is pure science or pure mathematics, but it is abstract in the sense that the bibliophile regards his

books primarily as ends in themselves, their use by scholars in general being a secondary consideration. On the other hand "applied bibliography" is a wholly appropriate term for librarianship, which is essentially a practical study. The librarian is concerned with books as vehicles of knowledge rather than objects of art; he is interested therefore in all books rather than certain selected volumes which for special and often extraneous reasons have acquired merit in the eyes of the bibliophile. The difference is one of extent and application, not of essence.

We can best answer the questions that face us by drawing in outline a map of the country of librarianship; that is, by listing its many divisions and commenting on each of them in turn. The subjects that appear in the examinations of the Library Association and in the curricula of the library schools at home and overseas are indeed many and various. Can we gather together into a single coherent system all that the librarian is expected to learn and know? We can then tell the better whether it justifies the term "a branch of learning" which our definition gives to it. We will arrange the subjects in roughly logical order for the sake of clarity, not claiming any finality for this particular order. It will be evident at first glance that the field is extensive—too extensive for any one student to master the whole of it in detail; the problems of alternatives and of specialisation will be discussed as we proceed. For easy reference the system is given in tabular form in an appendix.

### 1. *Theory of Librarianship*

Logically this must be placed at the head of our table, but as it has been fully discussed in the first two

chapters it needs no further comment here. Under this head we include the principles of librarianship, i.e., the subject as a whole in all its various aspects regarded as a unity and as a single coherent system. We include also the definition, purpose and scope of librarianship, and its relations with other subjects. This general view of the subject must be regarded as of considerable importance, if the various sub-divisions outlined below are to be understood in their proper perspective. Without it our approach to librarianship is liable to be one-sided and ill-balanced.

## 2. *History of Graphic and Printed Records*

The introductory survey of the theory of librarianship can logically be followed by its history, and to make it quite clear what we intend we may usefully borrow a phrase from our definition of librarianship and style it the "history of graphic and printed records." That is to say, we mean the history of the raw material with which we work and its utilisation. This is a subject so vast as to be almost frightening. To make matters worse, it has never been studied in a single, comprehensive work, and some parts of it have never been studied adequately at all; a great task awaits some bold historian-librarian of the future. In these circumstances we cannot expect the student to acquire more than a general picture of the history of records, though we may hope that after the invention of printing the picture will become more detailed. The subject includes, in addition to the history of manuscripts and books, the history of reading and of libraries, the history of printing, publishing, circulating libraries and bookselling, and the history of legislation regarding copyright, censor-

ship and the provision of libraries. On closer examination the subject may grow less awe-inspiring, for though we must include all countries and all periods in our general survey, we can reasonably limit the detailed story to our own country in more recent centuries. The term "history of reading" must be interpreted with reserve. It might, but should not, be regarded as equivalent to the history of civilisation and culture or the history of education. That would be straying into foreign territory, though this extension of the subject has indeed been suggested by our American friends. We shall be wise to limit it to the part that books have played in the great movements of civilisation such as for example the renaissance, the industrial revolution and the two world wars. It comprises such questions as the effect on reading of the format of books (the folio, the three-decker novel, the pocket edition), the price of books and the use of books for missionary and propaganda purposes. The history of publishing and bookselling must be treated from the reader's angle rather than from the technical point of view. A comprehensive history of bookselling and of bookshops in Great Britain is much needed and would throw considerable light on the story of the development of reading in our country.<sup>1</sup> The relationship between libraries and bookshops is also of interest. The importance of establishing libraries in every district in the country is rightly stressed, but the equal need for good bookshops in the provinces is often overlooked ; both have a big part to play in the life of the nation.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Plant's excellent work *The English book trade* (1939) surveys the field mainly from the economic angle ; a similar study from the literary viewpoint would be welcome.

### 3. *Graphic Records*

We begin with theory and history, and proceed to the technical part of our subject. It is logical to deal first with graphic records, because they come first historically, although they continue to contemporary times. Man learnt to write before he learnt to print, and he learnt to draw before he took to writing. His early efforts at representation either in art or symbolic language are the foundation on which his libraries of printed books are based. Nevertheless, though we take these early steps into due account, our interest in graphic records is mainly centred in the material which survives to this day ; that is, in written documents of historical and social significance. Our realisation of the importance of this material (whether it be mediæval or post-mediæval) to us today leads us to a realisation of the importance of current archives to future generations. In this sphere our concern therefore is (to use the words of our definition) the "recognition, collection, organisation, preservation and utilisation of graphic records," i.e., archive material. The stress is on the words "recognition" (which includes both interpretation and selection) and "preservation." The preservation of graphic material is of even greater importance than the preservation of printed books, because manuscripts are commonly both perishable and unique. The terms used to describe our study of graphic records are "palæography" and "archives" or "archive administration," the former referring to the recognition and interpretation of early documents, and the latter to the care and utilisation of all documents, whether early or modern.

It may be objected that we are in error in attempting to include this subject within the boundaries of



librarianship or applied bibliography. Some doubtless consider that it is a highly specialised science which should stand on its own feet. There are however good reasons for allying it to librarianship and for bringing both into one fold.

It is true that we are stretching the meaning of the word "bibliography," but there is no reason why this term should be confined to printed books. The root βιβλος was in common use two thousand years before Caxton, and had nothing to do with printing. It is in fact impossible in practice (as Esdaile explains in his *Students' manual*) to draw a hard and fast line between manuscript documents and printed books, and most good libraries, being interested in the matter rather than the form of their treasures, collect both. Similarly the scholar must have both at hand to help him in his researches. This is not to deny that it may be generally convenient to keep manuscripts and books in separate departments ; few if any librarians indeed would have the specialised knowledge to work successfully with both. But we do reject watertight compartments—the policy for example of most English county councils which divorces entirely the county library from the county record office. All libraries collecting material of historical value possess manuscript documents. Many municipal libraries in this country are approved repositories for this purpose, and the better ones employ trained archivists to take charge of their records. This practice is wholly right and proper, for both manuscripts and printed books gain in significance and value from close association. If this is true, the archivist and the librarian must equally gain from close association in the same organisation, and they are best regarded as specialised members of the same pro-

fession. The Library Association has for many years included palæography amongst its examinations: The successful candidate would hardly regard himself as a trained archivist, but he will have to some extent that familiarity with the subject which is part of the librarian's normal equipment. The University of London offers diplomas in both archives and librarianship, instruction for both being provided at the School of Librarianship and Archives ; the two courses are arranged to overlap slightly so that the students of either subject will be not unfamiliar with the scope and nature of the other. Thus archive students are expected to know something of bibliography and general librarianship, and librarianship students to know something of elementary palæography. The students on both sides work in the same school and mix with each other freely. This is as it should be. A course in archive work is also offered by Liverpool University, but in this case the connection with librarianship is not recognised. Apart from this course and the London Diploma, very little formal training of the academic type is offered anywhere for archive students, though apprenticeship training is of course given by record offices to newly recruited staff. In the United States graduates are recruited as archive workers and trained after appointment ; but there the problem is different, as the mediæval background is missing, and the number of libraries collecting English documents on a large scale is fortunately limited.

The subject must be divided into the elementary stage, which all librarianship students are expected to reach, and the advanced stage intended for those who wish to specialise in archive work. The arrangement

will vary according to the country in which students are working, for archive work varies according to national traditions and history. In this country the following is a possible arrangement :—

- (a) Elementary English palæography and archive administration for all students.
- (b) For archive students only, advanced English palæography ; archive administration ; English administrative history ; mediæval Latin ; Anglo-Norman French ; together with general bibliography and librarianship.

Courses in oriental palæography or epigraphy are provided for librarianship students who require them at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, but a complete training in archive work for oriental students has not yet been planned. Classical palæography is not included, this being a highly specialised subject not usually needed by the librarian. It should be noted that admission to the diploma course in archives at the University of London is restricted to graduates with a first or second class honours degree in arts.

Under the heading of graphic records therefore we include training in palæography for the general librarian and an advanced training for the student who proposes to specialise in archive work.

#### 4. *Printed Records*

We now advance from graphic to printed records, and in so doing approach the heart of bibliography. This subject is conveniently divided into (a) an introductory course, (b) historical and (c) modern bibliography. In this first section we limit ourselves to the

physical aspects of book production, namely the invention of printing and the development of printing types up to present times ; the manufacture of hand-made and machine-made paper ; the folding of sheets and construction of pamphlets and books ; collation ; binding ; illustration processes. These matters are treated from the angle of the bibliographer rather than from that of the printer, paper manufacturer or artist. This means that the subject will take less of our time than might appear from this formidable list of headings. We are not greatly concerned for example with the highly technical details of modern processes of reproduction ; the physical problems assume greater importance for us the further we go back towards Caxton. Nevertheless, the subject is large enough indeed, and the good librarian must be completely at home in all these matters.

##### 5. *Historical Bibliography*

This develops naturally from the foregoing section. It is what we have styled "pure bibliography," the field of the collector and bibliophile, but not less the field of the librarian for that. There is no need to define closely a tract of country so well known. We deal here in the main, but not entirely, with early books : their identification, their formal description, their arrangement, their various texts and editions, using for this purpose the basic knowledge acquired in the preceding section. Author and subject bibliographies are divided between the present section and the next. Those compiled mainly for the interest of the bibliographer or collector, i.e., those concerned with works which would naturally fall in this section, are considered here ; their purpose and arrangement

differs slightly from the bibliographies which we consider in the next section.

## 6. *Modern Bibliography*

From pure bibliography, which is largely historical, we advance to what we may regard as the essence of applied bibliography. This is bibliography considered, not from the angle of the book collector (important though that is) but from the angle of the scholar, student and research worker. Applied bibliography is practical and utilitarian. Though we cannot neglect the outward form of books, our eyes are turned rather to their matter and content. The primary consideration is their value to the student for a particular purpose. The analysis of their contents and a critical appreciation of their intrinsic worth and possible uses in the light of current needs governs our approach to this subject. We are concerned with the *use* of books, and we take into account their physical nature only in so far as it contributes to their use. And we cannot consider the use of books without also knowing something of the actual needs and purposes of the readers who may wish to use them. In this we have advanced far beyond the confines of pure bibliography and have reached the very heart of librarianship. We are still however in the country of bibliography, because our subject is still the study of the book—the printed record.

Practical bibliography in this sense of the term is an enormous subject, and a great part of the time-table in any course of training must be given up to it. We can arrange its various sub-divisions as follows :—

- (a) *Description* : theory and practice of cataloguing.
- (b) *Arrangement* : theory and practice of classification.

These subjects are commonly treated separately from bibliography, but they rightly take their place in this section ; indeed they gain in significance from this, for they are thus placed in their right relation to other parts of the subject. Modern cataloguing is a logical development from formal bibliographical description. Modern classification has its roots, not (as is sometimes supposed) in logical principles, but in the bibliographical arrangement of books for special purposes. No more will be said now on this subject, as the theory of classification is discussed in a later chapter. We may note here however that these, and indeed all the subjects in this section, are judged by standards of strictly practical value. Do they achieve their object ? Do they work conveniently and efficiently in practice ? This is the only standard against which all theories of applied librarianship can be tested.

(c) *Research material, editions, texts.*

Our ability to carry out the accurate description and good arrangement of books (cataloguing and classification) makes it possible to use them to the best advantage. We begin consideration of the use of books by a study of the material that is available for research in different subjects, and of the methods of utilising it. This is sometimes called "reference material" and "reference methods" because it describes the contents and utilisation of the reference department of a municipal library as distinct from the home-reading department. This indeed is the kind of work with which we are concerned, but as similar work is carried out in academic and other libraries established for general use the word "research" seems more appropriate. The word "reference" is better reserved for

what is commonly called "quick reference" material, i.e., dictionaries and encyclopædias required for consultation rather than study. These of course are basic needs in any research work, but our present task takes us far beyond this.

We are studying here therefore research material in all major subjects—the reference works, texts, periodicals and other sources of information which are in current use by students in all branches of knowledge. Now no man, not even a librarian, can expect to acquire an encyclopædic familiarity with every subject. Specialisation is becoming increasingly necessary in library research work, and the need for it will continue to grow. We must begin however with a general knowledge of the essential bibliographical tools in each main subject, and (what is equally important) we must know where to search for information that is not immediately accessible. We must know also *how* to search for it without waste of time and labour, and how to record the results of our research for future reference. This general familiarity with research tools is perhaps the most important part of the equipment of the good librarian. It is not easily acquired. To be effective, it presupposes an absence of prejudices and an abounding curiosity in every subject under the sun. It is simple enough to obtain the necessary familiarity with your one favourite subject. It is by no means so simple to discount your particular predilections and assume a genuine and balanced interest in almost every subject—for familiarity inevitably depends on interest, and interest cannot be donned like a new hat unless you have within you that insatiable spirit of exploration and adventure which means that every side-path, no matter where it leads, beckons you irresistibly. The

good librarian must be always young at heart. Not young in years, for youth has its prejudices and may indeed be more stiff-necked than old age ; but young at heart, which means that life is a joyous venture and rich with surprises. Dr. Savage says somewhere, "Learned in one subject but otherwise ill-read, a librarian is professionally as incapable as a centipede deprived of all but one foot." In this subject (which as we have said is the heart of librarianship) we need every single one of our hundred feet, and each must be planted firmly on the ground. Under this head therefore we consider the main reference works, bibliographical tools, current texts and other sources of information in each major subject and the method of using them.

(d) *Literature of special subjects.*

We said that the librarian of tomorrow must be prepared to specialise. So he must ; but that does not mean that he must shut himself up in an airtight compartment. Training in general librarianship must come first, and a general course has no room for over-much specialisation. Moreover few students know in what direction they are going to specialise before they have completed their general training and had a taste of experience in some type of library ; nor is it wise that they should limit themselves thus at this early stage. Those intending to take up "special library work" cannot in advance know in what type of special library they will be called upon to work. Any great degree of specialisation is therefore to be deferred to a later stage. A limited amount of specialisation may however be allowed in the general course, and in the case of graduates this will often follow the course of



their previous academic studies. It is in any case probably wise to supplement the general knowledge acquired in (c) above by more advanced and detailed work in one subject. If we are human, we shall inevitably have one suit in our hand stronger than the others ; or to revert to Dr. Savage's metaphor, the centipede will have amongst its hundred legs one or two that are sounder than the rest. The sensible thing to do is to make full use of whatever strong suits we have. Catholicity is a good thing, but it can be overdone ; to be fruitful, it must co-exist with a natural, healthy individuality.

The Library Association has always included in its syllabus one or more examinations in English literature. Lately it has provided in its final examination a paper in literary appreciation and criticism with various alternatives such as the literature of music, science or philosophy. The specialised alternatives give us what we need here. They are not however comparable subjects to literary appreciation, and we may think that an examination in English literature is out of place in an otherwise vocational test. It would be preferable to treat literature for this purpose bibliographically in the same way as the alternative subjects, and to rely on previous general education for the knowledge of English literature which every librarian (and every educated man) should possess. We may therefore follow up our general study of research methods by more detailed study of methods in one of the following major fields of knowledge : the literature of English literature, or the literature of history, science, economics, music or art. These correspond to the most usual academic degree courses, with the exception of music which is included on account of the importance

## APPLIED BIBLIOGRAPHY

of music libraries today. It would be unwise to attempt any more detailed specialisation than this ; and it is not even certain whether this amount of specialisation can be fitted profitably into a single year's course without congestion. The literature of a special subject may be taken as including, in addition to the material mentioned in (c) above, a more detailed knowledge of the bibliographical development of the subject, and the succession of histories, texts and critical works which have replaced each other in recent centuries, with some consequent study of the changes in knowledge which these represent ; it includes also a more detailed knowledge of the periodicals, year-books, etc., of the subject and their relative value.

### (e) *Reproduction methods.*

Instruction and demonstrations are included here in the use of apparatus for reproducing documents, books and cards for purposes of research and reference. The principal types of photostat and microfilm apparatus will be explained and their uses to the librarian demonstrated.

### (f) *Book selection : surveys.*

The previous sections (a) to (e) have covered the work of research and reference libraries. This section deals with book selection in other types of library, and with the methods of purchase and acquisition in general use. The chief problems of book selection arise in the general or popular library, and particularly in the home-reading departments of public libraries. Such libraries have the threefold task (a) of maintaining a stock which is reasonably balanced, (b) of keeping it fresh, vigorous and alive and (c) of catering for a

demand which is largely unspecified and unexpressed. This brings with it problems such as the relation between the home-reading department and the reference department, and the duty of the library in relation to popular demand. To what extent must the library attempt to mould popular taste? To what extent must it follow the general demand? These questions lead on to the problem of what may be termed "market research," i.e., surveys made to check the use that is being made of certain classes of books or the interests of certain sections of the population.

(g) *Author and subject bibliographies : guides to reading.*

We conclude the somewhat lengthy and complicated subject of modern bibliography with a study of the preparation of practical bibliographies for the guidance of students. These differ from the bibliographies considered in section 5 above under Historical Bibliography in that they are compiled not to illustrate the bibliographical development of the subject but for the practical use of students who need guides to available information in a particular field. This affects the form of entry and method of arrangement to some extent. Subject lists of this type are more commonly select rather than exhaustive, as from the student's point of view completeness has no value in itself. Under this heading we include the bibliographies appearing at the end of technical works (too often put together by authors in an awkward and clumsy fashion), select guides issued by libraries either for general publicity or in response to individual requests, and lists published by organisations such as the National Book League and the British Council. Such lists are often fully annotated, and their compilation

requires a sound knowledge of the subject if errors are to be avoided.

It may be mentioned here that the University of London School of Librarianship requires in Part III of the diploma examination (which follows the main written examination) a thesis or bibliography on an approved author or subject. A bibliography is in general preferred to a thesis, and this is prepared by the student in his own time after individual research. Considerable importance is attached to this part of the examination, for the ability to carry out research on a new field and produce a well-arranged bibliography is a valuable indication of competence in true librarianship.

It must be stressed that adequate bibliographical work presupposes an intensive knowledge of the subject. This is one argument in favour of subject specialisation in librarianship, and of the organisation of the general library into subject departments.

### 7. *Information*

We now progress to that more specialised development of a librarian's duties, namely, the supply of information. The supply of books has been largely dealt with in the preceding section. Modern trends in research make it impossible however to limit ourselves to books : most libraries are called upon to provide an information service of some type, while some libraries exist almost entirely for this purpose. This section covers mainly the work carried out in the commercial departments of public libraries and in the libraries and information bureaux established by scientific and industrial research associations. We can conveniently divide it into three parts :—

## LIBRARIANSHIP

### (a) *General information work.*

This includes information facilities provided by popular and general libraries, the maintenance of information rooms, etc. This differs in degree rather than kind from the more specialised work studied in (b) and (c) below, and both kinds are usefully studied together.

### (b) *Elementary documentation, indexing, abstracting.*

### (c) *Advanced information work.*

The advantage of separating (b) and (c) is that it provides for the highly specialised work required in scientific information bureaux. The general student may legitimately be content with a briefer survey of this subject in (b). Some acquaintance with the problems of indexing and abstracting is however desirable in every student, in whatever library he intends to work.

## 8. *Special Types of Libraries*

A study of applied bibliography must include consideration of the places in which bibliographical work (i.e., librarianship) is carried out, and of the way in which they are managed and maintained. This section includes subjects that are sometimes grouped under the heading of administration, but we are deliberately avoiding the use of this word. As has been suggested elsewhere, administration is not a profitable subject for classroom study, and it is wise to stress always the bibliographical rather than purely administrative aspects of the work. The historical development of libraries is treated in section 2 ; here we are concerned mainly with their present organisation and functions.

Work that is common to most types of library (and indeed some work that is restricted to special types) has already been considered in earlier sections. There is no need to repeat this here, and detailed study of the various libraries can be omitted. It is intended that every student should work through the whole of this section, which should provide a general picture of all the library resources available to the reader.

(a) *Co-operation.*

We may begin with inter-library co-operation, including under this heading the work of UNESCO, of national bibliographical centres, the National Central Library and similar organisations. This subject might well have been placed in section 6 (modern bibliography) but is perhaps better here.

(b) *National libraries.*

A general survey of the national libraries of the world.

(c) *Academic and research libraries.*

We are concerned here in the main with British university libraries and other learned libraries, their special responsibilities, problems and methods, including organisation, staffing, planning, etc.

(d) *Public libraries.*

This covers British and American municipal and county libraries, their organisation, staffing, planning, reports, committee work and extension work.

(e) *School libraries, children's libraries.*

This subject can be considered separately from public libraries because special courses on school

libraries are occasionally required. The general relationship between libraries and education is dealt with in section 1. Here we can restrict ourselves to the general planning of a library service for children and adolescents either in or out of school.

This then is the extent of the field of applied bibliography, which is the term we have given to the subject matter of librarianship. It does not summarise all that the good librarian needs to know. It does however present a picture in brief of all that profitably can be learnt by the young student in classroom study.

We set out to answer two questions in particular. First, is there sufficient of solid academic value in the study of librarianship to justify a full-time university course? The answer can more readily be given in the affirmative if in planning the course the emphasis is laid on the subject of bibliography, which can properly be claimed as an academic subject. In the plan outlined in this chapter every part of our study is seen as one facet of this subject, either in its pure or applied form. Secondly, is there sufficient material in the subject to occupy a normal year's course? The answer is probably that there is too much, even if reasonable alternatives amongst the more specialised aspects are allowed. A strong case could be made out for regarding two years as the desirable period of full-time study. One thing is certain, namely, that there is no room here for the extraneous subjects which have been introduced into the course at certain library schools; and it is a fair assumption that where such subjects are included, the genuine subject of librarianship is receiving partial and inadequate treatment.

Nor is there room for background subjects such as modern languages. We have confined our picture to the strictly technical aspects of librarianship, for the good reason that in a course of reasonable length there is no time for anything but these. This means that the student must come to the course already equipped with an appropriate standard of general culture. He must for example be able at least to read without undue difficulty two modern languages in addition to his own, and he should have reached a moderate standard in Latin. He will derive greater benefit from the course and secure a wider field for himself afterwards if he has also reached graduate level in one major subject such as English, history, science or economics. Though there may always be exceptions in special cases, it is wise to regard the training scheme which we have described as a postgraduate course following on a degree in arts or science. That the student needs subject-knowledge in good measure to form a background to his librarianship and to form the basis of his bibliographical work is beyond dispute. That the greater part of this must be acquired before the course of training begins should be evident. Not only must the background come logically before the foreground but the course is already so full that no time is available for much besides the strict subject of librarianship. The remainder of his subject-knowledge will be acquired after his formal training has ended by practical experience either in a special library or in a special department of a general library. Whatever his subject field may be, the basic knowledge of librarianship which he will require is largely the same ; and there is no need for a high degree of subject specialisation during the formal course.



## CHAPTER V

### THEORY OF ARRANGEMENT

WE call this chapter the "Theory of arrangement" rather than of classification for two reasons. First because it brings out the special purpose of library classification, which is the arrangement of books for easy reference. Secondly because it emphasises the fact that cataloguing and classification are not separate and distinct techniques. They are two aspects of the same process—the description and arrangement of books and documents ; and this process is itself but one feature of the subject we know as bibliography. Classification is impossible till the units to be arranged have been identified and described. Similarly the description of the units is a waste of time unless, when exactly described, they are arranged systematically in such a way as to display their inter-relations and make possible their use. Arrangement therefore presupposes description ; and part at least of the purpose of description is the coherent arrangement of the things described. The final object is, and must always be, the practical use of the things which have been described and arranged. In the maze of argument and counter-argument which surrounds the subject of classification it is well to bear in mind these elementary points.

What is the basis of library classification ? The makers of some of the great schemes of book classifica-

tion have assumed that they must be grounded on logical sanctions. They have been aided and abetted by thinkers who have sought to narrow the gap between the classification of books and the classification of knowledge. The arrangement of books, it was thought, should approximate as closely as possible to the arrangement of ideas ; and they struggled to obtain this approximation without having any clear conception of the ideal order to which they wished to harness our books. There was indeed no prospect of agreement on the arrangement of ideas, or any certainty that a permanent and final order was possible. Nevertheless they felt that the honour of librarianship was in some sense at stake. This was (they supposed) our main—perhaps our only—point of contact with the real world of scholarship. If this slender bridge between logic and librarianship should be mined, we should be adrift and at sea. Our pretensions to genuine learning would be gone. We should be nothing but playboys in our own barren world of technique. We knew too well that this private world of ours was already full of playboys, but we cherished this golden thread that bound us to reality—it was our badge of respectability.

Let us be thankful however that our worth and good name has never depended on so insecure a link with the real world. If this had been our only line of communication with reality our nakedness would have been exposed years ago. We were forgetting that classification is not the whole of librarianship ; and we forgot too that librarianship is bibliography, and that bibliography is something that can stand squarely on its own feet without any adventitious supports.

And so for many years the logicians in the biblio-

technical camp continued to discuss the foundations on which they stood. They had an uncomfortable feeling sometimes that these foundations were not as secure as they should be. The hard world of reality to which they strove to anchor themselves was proving less solid than they had supposed. It was growing, expanding and developing before their eyes, changing its shape from moment to moment like the cloud that hangs above a volcano. They saw it slipping away from them, and they could not keep up with it. How can you tie up a classification scheme to an anchorage that will not keep still? Knowledge was advancing, moving, taking fresh shapes, showing different perspectives, different relationships. The logical basis for which we sought was growing more and more elusive.

Then the bridge collapsed altogether. Or at least a book appeared<sup>1</sup> which claimed to have demolished it. Broadfield is a librarian with friends in the opposing camp of philosopher-logicians (as distinct from the bibliotechnical-logicians). He collected from them a miscellaneous store of second-hand ammunition (his armament consists largely of a battery of artfully interwoven quotations from other writers) and thus equipped he let loose a volley of small shot at the bridge.

This piece of apparent treachery from within the bibliotechnical camp scarcely produced the effect intended, mainly because the majority of the librarians who read the book were so bewildered by the mazy twistings of his argument that they gave up the attempt to understand it and returned none the wiser to their monotonous manipulations of Dewey. However, the bridge had been demolished. Or, rather,

<sup>1</sup> A. Broadfield. *The philosophy of classification*. Grafton, 1946.

Broadfield claimed to have shown that it had never existed, except as a wish-fulfilment dream amongst the bibliotechnical philosophers. The fact that the shattering of this dream produced scarcely a ripple on the sleeping waters of librarianship might be taken to indicate that nobody now supposed the existence of the bridge mattered very much one way or the other. Possibly by this time the average librarian thinks he has seen through the artificial puzzle of library classification. Only one or two of the school of bibliotechnical logicians showed any fight or returned any fire. And of these the only one that brought any of the divine fury into the battle or scored any hits on this new upstart was the valiant Bliss—the greatest of the logicians of librarianship. But Bliss was not defending the orthodox bridge. He had taken up a securer and more tenable position on the flank. Broadfield's shower of missiles disturbed him much as Gulliver was disturbed by the Lilliputian arrows ; and he turned and brought down on Broadfield's book the whole force of his heavy artillery.

Let us have done with this confusion of metaphors and be serious again. There is not such a gulf between Broadfield's position and that of Bliss as might be imagined. The difference is that though both are acute thinkers, the one excels at destruction, while the other has a strongly creative and constructive mind. Ninepins are easily demolished if you have the right ammunition and can aim true. But the able philosopher Bliss is angered at the sight of a deserted battlefield strewn with tumbled ninepins. The prostrate ninepin must be replaced with one that is firmer on its feet. Besides, some of these ninepins belonged to Bliss himself, and so the warrior must needs strengthen his

own defences and rebuild his battlements. The opposition between Bliss and Broadfield is the opposition between creative and destructive thought.

Can we sort out this tangled web? Library classification is a practical method with a definite purpose, that of making possible the effective use of a collection of books. As we have seen in an earlier chapter, practical methods must be tested and justified by use. They are not to be judged by any extraneous or *a priori* standards, whether logical or otherwise. They must stand or fall on their own merits as effective instruments for their special purpose. They must be designed for this express object, and not to satisfy any preconceived notions of logical pattern. A classification scheme that is effective, easy to operate and easy to understand, a scheme that reveals the secrets of a collection of books quickly and intelligibly—this is a good scheme. Any scheme, however well founded logically, that fails to do these things is a bad scheme. The prime necessity is a scheme that *works*.

There are two other important considerations to be borne in mind. One is that if a scheme of classification is adopted by a library—at least by any but a small library—it must be regarded as relatively permanent. It must be capable of enduring and remaining workable indefinitely. No great library that has been classified can ever contemplate changing its scheme of classification; to attempt such an immense task would be a futile waste of effort. It is not sufficient for a scheme to be hospitable to new subjects. It must be capable of absorbing and displaying new relationships, and new perspectives; it must be able to reflect changes in the balance of knowledge which take place from generation to generation. Most schemes are in fact

capable of bold readjustment of this kind. The danger, if any, lies in the conservatism of the people who operate the scheme. It is so much easier to imitate Procrustes by forcing facts into pigeon-holes which they will not fit. An elastic scheme demands not merely an elastic but a far-seeing mind to work it; and the minds of classifiers are prone to a kind of petrification. They view any prospect of change with a natural and understandable horror. This leads us to the other consideration, which is a comforting one.

Somebody once remarked that a political constitution depends far more on the goodwill and reasonableness of those who have to work it than on its own logical perfection. Substitute the words "classification scheme" for "constitution" and you have the truest remark that was ever made about library classification. It is a profound truth, if a rather humiliating one to the inventors of new schemes, that within due limits almost any common-sensible scheme works well if the library staff treat it intelligently. A logically poor scheme will produce excellent results in good hands—far better results than a logically perfect scheme in bad hands. This fact, though consoling to libraries already classified with imperfect schemes, is of course no reason why we should not continue searching for other schemes better adapted to new and changing conditions.

Now we come to another fact of outstanding importance. This is the altogether astonishing fluidity of human knowledge today. Our forefathers in the Victorian age imagined themselves astride the whole universe. They saw the *systema nature* as a landscape at their feet. They supposed that it awaited surveying, mapping and exactly measuring to be wholly and finally delineated in every particular. Time has

passed ; the measuring and the mapping proceeds, but the goal of finality is farther away than ever. The astronomer has described for us the expanding universe of the stars. Here we have an objective world expanding before our eyes year by year, expanding so rapidly that the Victorian colossus is unhorsed. Knowledge does not so much advance as *expand* in every direction, like the smoke and noise of an explosion. It is a chastening thought.

The classifier wants above all to see three things. He wants to divide the universe into distinct units with stable characteristics. He wants each unit given by common consent a permanent name, signifying its relationship with other units. He wants all the units placed in a fixed and immutable order. This is the classifier's dream. Is there anything so unlikely to make his dream come true as the universe as we know it today ? Neither in the inorganic world, nor in the organic world, nor in the country of the mind can we find these discrete and unchangeable units. In the subjective world of our thoughts we have grown accustomed, following Locke and Hume, to regard our mental processes as a succession of distinct ideas, like a row of so many beans. We realise now that our ideas are not thus separable. They merge into each other. They are elastic and expansible. They flow like a rising and falling stream. The only ideas that seem to have stability are the universal concepts of the philosopher. But have even these the stability the classifier demands ? If the species are unstable, the genus which is realised only in its species must be equally undefined.

Bliss writes of the instability of conceptual ideas, and states that greater stability is to be expected in the

objective world of nature. But even here the lack of stability is striking ; or perhaps, taking the blame ourselves, we should call it the lack of stability of our view of the objective world. We grope laboriously forward, and the horizon recedes before us. In the inorganic world we discover daily new compounds, new alignments of existing compounds, new uses for the compounds of yesterday. And remember—classification if it is anything must be purposive. It is *use* as well as internal analysis that must govern the arranging of units in a classification scheme. In the organic world the fog is just as impenetrable. Biologists have been carrying out serious work on the scientific problems of classification for nearly two centuries—far longer than librarians or bibliographers—and we might expect their achievements to throw light on our own difficulties. They have indeed made much progress ; but even as they advance, the biological world widens and the prospect of finality retreats. Consider the insects. Linnæus knew of 1,929 different species. According to A. D. Imms the number known is now close on a million. There are 20,000 known species of British insects, a total so large that a complete natural history of even our own British insects is impossible. Every year in the world as a whole about ten thousand new insects are discovered, named and described, and this process will go on indefinitely. And each new species brings the possibility of regrouping and renaming existing species.

If we turn to the vertebrate fauna, the mists are no clearer though the field is more restricted. Every year the taxonomic “ splitters ” are hard at work discovering new variants which may deserve sub-specific or even



specific rank, and the "lumpers" are busy rejecting their claims. In nomenclature and arrangement there is equal instability and uncertainty. Official names are changed and changed again in the endeavour to interpret faithfully the international rules of nomenclature. The prospect of final world agreement about either nomenclature or systematic order is remote. Even in a still narrower field such as ornithology there is no universally accepted order. In this country alone there are at least four recognised orders: the order adopted by the British Museum (Natural History), the order accepted by the Zoological Society of London, the order adopted by Witherby in his *Handbook* (1941) which is based on that of *Die Vögel der paläarktischen Fauna*, and the American system devised by Alexander Wetmore which is gradually receiving international recognition. As Witherby admits in his introduction, Wetmore's system is probably more satisfactory, though he prefers the earlier order on account of its familiarity in this country. And on the subject of nomenclature he states: "The effect of years of research and discussion to decide, on the basis of strict priority, the correct name to be used, has been to produce a marked uniformity in the species names adopted in various recent European lists. It must be remembered however that different authors may have different opinions as to what birds shall be grouped together as one genus or what birds shall be treated as sub-species. *There are no hard and fast rules to govern such opinions. And indeed our knowledge is as yet insufficient to allow such rules to be framed.* There must therefore still sometimes be a lack of uniformity in the *combination* of names used by various authors for some birds." The italics are mine.

We cannot of course expect that an arrangement based on evolutionary order will remain static. The very name implies change and development, not in our knowledge of species and their true characteristics (which is still lamentably small) but in the kinds of organisms themselves. In remote islands and ecologically isolated communities variants arise and become sub-species, and sub-species by slow gradations assume specific characters. Many biologists, including Darwin, have inclined to the view that the determination of species is purely arbitrary. David Lack<sup>1</sup> however regards this view as not wholly correct, and he adds that the apparent fixity of species is most striking, providing a reasonably secure basis for systematic zoology. Nature of course moves slowly, not in leaps and bounds, and intermediate forms are the result. It is these intermediate forms which disturb the systematist. Taxonomists are said on occasion to give them a midnight burial in the gardens of their museum. Library classifiers know this problem only too well, and the library furnace may sometimes have offered an opportunity for cremation which the bemused classifier found it hard to resist.

But even if the species has a certain relative stability, there is little or no prospect of stability about either nomenclature or genus or arrangement. Let us go for a summing up to that distinguished American systematist Ernst Mayr who writes:<sup>2</sup> "No system of nomenclature and no hierarchy of systematics is able to represent adequately the complicated set of inter-relationships and divergences found in nature. Not even the most extreme splitting will ever lead to

<sup>1</sup> *Darwin's finches*. 1947. p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> *Systematics and the origin of species*. New York, 1942.

completely homogeneous categories." In the same work Mayr adds that "The genus of the systematist is his own artificial creation and not a natural unit," though it is based on a natural phenomenon. Other systematists endorse this view. Thorpe<sup>1</sup> thinks it "better to admit frankly that the genus is purely artificial and leave it at that." Huxley writes :<sup>2</sup> "The definition of genera and sub-genera is often largely a matter of convenience . . . the common habit of splitting old-established genera into a number of new genera is frequently an abuse of systematic method, because an unnecessary denial of taxonomic convenience." These striking admissions are quoted by R. E. Moreau in an illuminating article<sup>3</sup> on taxonomic terms.

Surely here we have all the ingredients for a classifier's nightmare? But no! The nightmare will come only if the classifier insists on logical or evolutionary sanction for his scheme. If the scheme is *purposive*, i.e., it is interested in taxonomic (or bibliographical) convenience rather than logic, he can surmount these problems, in spite of the fact that his scheme of library classification must be relatively fixed, and can therefore never keep up with the slow gradation of nature or the twistings and turnings of the taxonomists.

Let us leave biology for the moment and consider other spheres of library classification. There are other logical arrangements than the evolutionary order of the

<sup>1</sup> *The new systematics*. 1940.

<sup>2</sup> *Evolution, the modern synthesis*. 1942.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibis* 1948. 102-11. Similarly Col. Meinertzhagen, an authority of equal standing, writes: "Avian classification, which is little more than making an inventory of the birds of the world, is an entirely artificial method aiming at convenience, but based on what we believe to be the truth." *Ibis* 1935. 762.

*systema naturæ*. There is for example the time order. This is by no means the same as the evolutionary order.

The time order not only governs history in all its branches, but is an obviously convenient method of arranging many subjects which are susceptible to historical treatment. It does not signify cause and effect (*post hoc* is not *propter hoc*), but for all that the temporal sequence has logical value and is not purely artificial. Alphabetical order is artificial, but often has the prime value of convenience. Temporal sequence on the other hand, in addition to convenience, brings with it a logical significance of its own. It has the further value that there is universal agreement about the time sequence. It only breaks down when one remembers that it is limited to the past. Time does not stop with the present, but our knowledge of it does. There is thus a gap in our knowledge which can *never* be filled. It is true that history deals with the past and not the future. But the future as it becomes present reshapes our knowledge of the past. Our perspectives of the past alter with each day that passes ; each new historical event has its effect on our changing view of the past. The lights and shadows shift, the stresses vary, the accepted proportions of the historical landscape are disturbed, as we move forward through time to new viewpoints. It is as if we were travelling in a train past distant landmarks which remained constantly in our field of vision though our view of them was slowly changing. Here again then it is our ignorance which distorts the truth. And yet our changing view of history must somehow be reflected in our classification scheme. Those of us who have attempted to classify books through the shattering periods of two world wars know well the complications which the

passage of time can bring to a fixed scheme of classification. One need only consider the D.C. division 940, into which is crowded not merely the general history of Europe but curiously enough the two world wars as well, and compare it with the remaining classes of this division, 941-949. This is not Dewey's fault, for no maker of schemes can foresee the future. It means however that no human being can hope to obtain a completely logical view of the time sequence, and that our schemes for the arrangement of history must be based partly at least on our practical convenience and present needs rather than on logical validity.

Another logical arrangement is the place order. This again is logical in the sense of being not purely artificial; neither place nor time order gives us the true logical division into genus and species. Unlike time, the place in which we live (i.e., the world, if not the universe) is fairly adequately mapped. It might be thought therefore that we could produce a reasonably complete scheme for place order. Here again however difficulties crop up. There are at least seven different systems of geographical division: physical, meteorological, biological, racial, economic, strategic and political. None of them coincides with any of the others. All have different purposes, and all overlap. Physical divisions may be based largely on geological features. Meteorological areas are based only partly on physical features. Biological divisions to some extent follow physical features, but in zoology at least geological boundaries are sometimes ignored; the division of the British Isles into groups of vice-counties based partly on the river systems is an example. Strategic divisions take into account population groups as well as physical features. Racial, economic and

political divisions cut across all these groups, and the political divisions especially are subject to violent changes from time to time. No single geographical scheme of classification is possible for the world as we know it, and any division of the world must be related to the special purpose governing it.

The other main form of logical arrangement is that of the general and the particular, or more strictly of the universal and the individual. This is the true logical division of genus and species, but it occurs only occasionally in most schemes of library classification. In logic the genus is realised solely and wholly in each of its species. It has no existence apart from the species, and it is completely enshrined in each one of them. The genus is not so to speak a basic recipe to which an extra ingredient is added in the shape of the differentia to form the species, much as the basic recipe for a cake may be used to produce an orange, chocolate or coffee cake by adding an extra flavouring ingredient. The concept of humanity (or human kind) for example is realised in the various kinds of black, white or brown men. It has no existence apart from these kinds, and is unthinkable without thinking of its expression in one of its kinds. There is no basic recipe for humanity to which the colours brown, white or black can be added.

The logical form of the genus-species relation is not found in biological systematics. We do not know the essential nature of the genus in biology. The biological genera are based on the resemblance of characteristics rather than logical identity-in-difference, and as has been seen taxonomic convenience plays a considerable part in their determination. Moreover the biological genus is frequently founded on a "type-species" to

which the other species conform with the addition of fixed variations.

In other parts of the classification the logical genus-species relation is replaced by classes or groups of individual instances. Thus in the geographical divisions, Europe is not a genus with France, Italy, Germany, etc., as its species. There is no concept of Europe which is wholly expressed in the concept of France. We have here a distributive class rather than a group of kinds revealing generic identity with special differences. On the other hand the concept "language" is a genus with the various *kinds* of languages as its species. Language is an identity which is thinkable only in one of its special kinds, and wholly realised in each.

In many parts of the classification there are subdivisions which are not specific kinds but aspects or relations of the main division. These very necessary sub-divisions are not true species. Thus evolution is divided by Dewey into subjects such as heredity, variation, ecology, adaptation, sexual selection, development, origin of species, etc. These are not separate kinds embodying the generic idea of evolution; they form rather a series of different viewpoints of a single idea, and the difference is a difference of emphasis rather than kind. A treatise on any one of these subjects can scarcely avoid discussing the other aspects of genetics also; the distinction is purposive, not specific. Indeed wherever the difference between classes rests on a question of emphasis as between one viewpoint and another, we may conclude that the classification is based not on specific characters, but on the special purpose either of the book classified or of the library using the classification. A general library

without special interests in the field of biology might without loss class all these aspects under one heading such as genetics. On the other hand a library with special purposes in palæontology, or in any one of the many fields of biology, might prefer its own arrangement of these viewpoints. The various possible aspects of genetics can and should be altered, adjusted and emphasised to meet the particular needs of the library.

In the so-called form divisions, purpose rather than specific characters is obviously the dominant consideration. An article in any encyclopædia may convey exactly the same information as an article in a technical treatise ; the separation of encyclopædias from treatises is however justified as a matter of evident convenience. For some special purposes it is sometimes legitimate to disregard the subject-matter of the book entirely. A collection of incunabula may properly be arranged in Proctor order ; a collection of binding may be given a special order based on historical or other factors ; a collection of drama may be based on the exigencies of play-production (number of characters, sex, etc.) instead of on author, period or school.

It is therefore apparent that a classification of books must be based on many different types of division in which logic, form and artifice are all mingled. The ruling factor in every case is the special purpose in view. When we come to consider the *order* of divisions we find the same variety of methods. Time order, alphabetical order, the sequence from general to particular, the order of general acceptance or convenience are all represented. There may be an ideal order ; indeed a logical order can be detected in certain fields, and may be assumed to exist in all. But



we are too ignorant of the true nature and relationships of things to apply it everywhere. In the lower grades of the hierarchy where kinds of equal status are grouped together, if there is no generally accepted arrangement the precise order is immaterial. In science there is a natural evolutionary order proceeding from inorganic to organic and from primitive forms of life to the more highly developed forms. In history there is the time order, but place order is in general immaterial (provided adjoining districts are kept together) though it can sometimes be conveniently adapted to special purposes. In art and technical subjects an evolutionary order can be attempted, but it is of little importance ; as in all such cases, topics related by purpose are grouped together. In philosophy and religion there is a natural historical or evolutionary order.

In the higher grades of the hierarchy order becomes less and less important. From the point of view of convenience the main forms of art or the main schools of philosophy might be grouped in any order or no order at all, though probably our natural instinct for neatness of finish will impose some sort of order on such groups. It is on the main divisions (e.g., Dewey's ten main classes) that most of the argument about order has been focussed. Should it run from simple to complex, primitive to advanced, or vice versa ? The answer is that it is impossible to arrange these main classes in a logical order of any value. We do not know enough about the universe. Such limited knowledge as we have would in fact suggest not a linear arrangement but some type of circular grouping around a common nucleus. In practice the order of the main classes matters not at all. In most libraries

of any size the main classes are so large that any virtue arising from their proximity to other main classes is lost. All we can say is that related classes (*e.g.*, economics and history, philosophy and religion, language and literature) are best kept together, while the miscellaneous division of general works is conveniently placed at either the end or the beginning.

Where do these manifold considerations lead us? We find that library classification is not based on any one all-embracing principle. A variety of factors, of which logic is only one, govern the formation and arrangement of the divisions and sub-divisions. If we demand a single principle which outweighs other considerations and settles points of doubt, we shall find nothing better than the principle of practical convenience. By this we mean the convenience of the readers and of the staff of the library. This means in effect that the classification must be related to the special purposes of the library. And since the purposes of most general libraries vary in different subject-departments; since moreover these special purposes often conflict (as for example the purposes of an economics and a history department, or the purposes of the library of a teaching department and of a research department at a university, each of which may demand different arrangements of the same material); it follows that any general scheme of classification must be the result of a compromise between a series of special classifications in different fields. It may follow also that a compromise of this kind so negatives the value of the special classifications that it is not worth attempting. We do know in fact that a completely logical and universal scheme is, in the present state of

our knowledge, impossible. We may however be justified in attempting to draft complete schemes if we remember first that they must be based on a compromise of special interests, and secondly that the order, arrangement and assignment of classes is never quite so important as either the logician or the librarian or the user of the library sometimes imagines. We have already remarked that the goodwill and reasonableness of the people who operate the scheme far outweigh considerations of logical validity.

Moreover if purpose and convenience are the governing considerations, the scheme must be sufficiently elastic to yield to changes of purpose and emphasis. It is bound to be static compared with advancing knowledge. But the scheme is less sacred than man's purposes. It was made for books and their utilisation, not books for the scheme. Though complete reclassification of a library may be impossible, the regrouping and rearrangement of parts of it should be attempted where convenience or utility require. This may on occasion be effected partially by the provision of special indexes or special displays which need not interfere with the main scheme. The direction of interest by methods of this kind to narrow fields in order to meet special needs may well be of more value to the reader than the general classification scheme, particularly as they are readily adapted to changing circumstances and can be selective rather than inclusive in regard to material. This indeed is one element of the goodwill and reasonableness needed for the operation of any scheme. Assuming aids of this type, it is arguable that in any general library large or small, if the whole range of books were divided into, say, a hundred main groups

(more or less), each group being arranged alphabetically or in any other convenient way and the whole provided with a master index, the needs of readers would be met just as effectively as if a large and complex scheme were in use. A special library handling information and documents which demand close subject classification to render them accessible doubtless requires a complex scheme ; but a general library containing for the most part books readily identifiable by their author might well be content with a greatly simplified arrangement. The experience of very large libraries with little or no subject arrangement tends to confirm this. One of the greatest needs of the student which is not always met by a close classification is the separation of elementary and popular material from advanced works. If the simplified arrangement which we have suggested could provide for this, it might prove the ideal method for a popular or general library.

Let us return to Broadfield and Bliss. Broadfield's main contention is that our present ignorance of the world and of the essential nature of things is so great that a truly logical classification of books or knowledge is impossible. We have seen that this is largely true. A logical or quasi-logical element can be achieved here and there in the classification, but many other factors are involved ; above all, practical convenience and the special purpose of the library. Obviously however we cannot leave the matter there. We have seen too that purposes vary, and that if purpose is the governing factor a general classification can only be a compromise between a series of special classifications. Broadfield's contribution to the discussion is mainly a negative and destructive one. The next step is to

pick up the pieces and rebuild our scheme in a constructive way, without making untenable claims about its logical validity.

The position which Bliss takes up is best summarised in his own words—words which should be painstakingly digested by every student of classification :—

“ In the systems of Science, Education and Society, the organisations (systems) of knowledge, thought and purpose, established, though incompletely, in a consensus of scientists and educators, avail, though imperfectly, for classifications of subject-matters, and of books or other bibliographic materials, with a maximal efficiency relative to various interests and purposes. Such classifications depend principally on valid subordination of related special subject-matters, or sub-classes, to the relevant general subjects, or classes ; and any maximal efficiency depends on purposive and convenient collocation of closely related sub-classes under the relevant general classes. This relative maximal efficiency is complemented by many references to alternative locations that avail for different interests or views. These five principles, named briefly : Subordination, Collocation, Maximal efficiency, Relativity of classification and Alternative location, are basic to the philosophy of classification and to our proposed Bibliographic classification. This is our most comprehensive brief statement of these principles and that philosophy.”

There is here the admission of imperfection and the reliance on the special purposes of scientists on which we have insisted. The “ consensus of scientists and educators ” partly replaces intrinsic logical value.

Broadfield denies the validity of any such consensus. It is true that it is hard to find in some fields, but if we remember that our libraries are intended for practical use and not as keys to the undiscoverable secrets of the universe, we may guess that we should be foolish to ignore any established consensus of opinion that we can find. The consensus will admittedly vary in different countries and different periods. It will not be the same in (shall we say?) Eire as in Moscow. Remembering our limitations, is not this as it should be? The clientèle of a library in Dublin will differ conspicuously from that of a library in Soviet Russia, and in the absence of universally valid principles of division, it is surely right that the special interests of the clientèle should govern the arrangement of the books. As we shall see in the next chapter, every library is coloured by its environment; and this affects its classification as well as its stock. To a great extent Bliss provides for this by a wealth of alternative placings. The free adjustment of the scheme by these and similar methods to the special purposes of the library is the ready way to secure the maximal efficiency which must be the prime object of every method of arranging the material in a library.

The bibliographic classification rests on a compromise between the various possible bases of division. This must of course be true of any scheme, but Bliss carried the compromise further and links the threads with more subtlety than any previous worker has succeeded in doing. He gathers together not merely the natural order of objective phenomena and the logical or scientific order of all knowledge, but the subjective orders of knowledge embodied first in the historical development of learning and secondly in

the academic teaching of subjects. This last is a highly important factor of practical utility which none of the other great schemes recognise except that of Ranganathan. The result of this welding together of different orders of knowledge is a two-dimensional tabulation of astonishing intricacy, ingenuity and indeed beauty. The final compromise is effected in the "order by speciality" which readjusts the system in such a way that it can be applied for library use. It is inevitable that some of its subtlety should be lost in this last process, but the architecture of the completed system remains a magnificent achievement.

If a general classification must in the nature of things be a compromise between the often conflicting purposes of special classifications, it follows that no general classification will ever completely satisfy the specialist. As has been mentioned, Bliss tackles this difficulty by the provision of alternative places and arrangements on a very wide scale. This enables the special classifications to retain a great deal of their individuality in spite of their incorporation in the general scheme; and the scheme becomes not so much a general classification (which in the present state of knowledge may be a goal out of our reach) as a complicated network of interwoven special classifications, bound together without constriction and with room for free play under a common notation. The bibliographic classification has still to be justified in practice as a unified system. However ingenious, however scholarly it may appear in theory, it must await this final test of practical utility. The vital question is not "Is it a true mirror of reality?" but "Does it work in practice as a library tool?"

In conclusion let us summarise the picture. On the one hand we have the objective world and our subjective experience both in a state of fluidity and extreme instability. Both are undergoing development, evolution, expansion and often sudden changes of direction. On the other hand we have an intuitive assurance that there is an ideal order of things if only we could see through the fog that conceals it. The fog however remains impenetrable ; indeed it seems to thicken as the world advances. In this atmosphere of conflicting purposes and imperfect vision we are faced with the need of giving a relatively stable arrangement to the physical embodiments of our limited knowledge which we call books. The object of such an arrangement is not the attainment of an ideal order but the practical use of the books themselves. Their convenient arrangement is comparatively easy in small fields, but becomes more and more difficult as the field widens to embrace the whole of knowledge ; so difficult that it becomes natural to ask whether the labour entailed in perfecting a comprehensive scheme is really justified. Is it worth the lifetime's devotion which Bliss has brought to it ?

There can be only one answer. Knowledge has absolute value. This is the faith of all scholarship. And if knowledge is thus precious for its own sake, we must struggle daily and hourly with its arrangement, however hard the task. For knowledge unarranged and unrelated is knowledge lost. This is the creed and justification of the classifier of knowledge and of libraries. This is the inspiration which has driven the authors of every scheme of book classification to design and perfect their systems. This is the inspiration which will impel future classifiers to amend, adjust and



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improve on the achievements of their predecessors. But as with all technical methods the final test of each scheme will remain the practical convenience of those who operate it. For though knowledge has absolute value, its arrangement has none unless it reveals that value to the student.

## CHAPTER VI

### KNOWLEDGE AND LIBERTY

KNOWLEDGE has absolute value. It can guide us to other and lesser ends ; but because it is an end in itself it cannot be enslaved. If chains are placed upon it, it loses its purity and ceases to have value in itself. It can lead, but it cannot be manacled. Knowledge without liberty is an unthinkable contradiction, because liberty is of its essence. Knowledge pinioned is knowledge perverted, as a fair countenance may be perverted and made ugly by a distorting mirror. But the perverted reflection of knowledge enslaved is not ugliness ; it is falsity. Truth is changed by imprisonment into lies.

The fetters that men place on knowledge are of many kinds. They may be individual ; that is, they may be due to the weakness of the flesh and the frailty of human purpose. The seven deadly sins are deadly precisely because they distort the truth that is in us. This is evil, but the evil is limited because there are other men around us with a vision that is purer than ours. Or again the fetters may be social, political and national. Such fetters are more insidious and more fatal than those due to the weakness of the individual. Like weeds in the lawn that spread their flat leaves to right and left, shutting out the light from the young grass underneath, they kill everything that comes within their power. The light of truth cannot penetrate the darkness they create. They are wholly evil.

Because knowledge must be free, so also is freedom necessary to librarianship. The librarian is not concerned with the discovery of knowledge, nor with its teaching, nor with its application. His duty is rather to guard its lines of communications and to make possible its free circulation. Those who would destroy the liberty of the individual know well that the lines of communication are vulnerable, and their first onslaughts are made not only on places of learning but on the libraries that store the material of learning.

We are accustomed to call the political theory which is based on freedom of thought and freedom of enquiry by the name of democracy. Caution is however needed in the use of this word because it has of late been stolen from its rightful owners by the believers of a very different political creed which does not recognise the value of liberty. Historically the word derives from the political systems of the Greek city states over two thousand years ago, though in its adaptation to modern conditions the democratic idea has undergone startling changes. Of the two types of modern theory, the pseudo-democracy of the police state would probably be less strange (though doubtless less acceptable) to the Athenians of the age of Pericles, who were familiar with the ways of tyrants both good and bad. They would have been astonished by many of the developments of Western democracy, such as for example universal suffrage. The Athenians would not, however, have been misled by the artfulness of the police states in appropriating the word "democracy." With us, the very extravagance of the claim makes it the more dangerous. We have seen in our age the rise and fall of the tyrants in Germany and Italy. They used the machinery of democracy as a stepping-stone to

power, but having secured their position they rejected it with contempt. We are now witnessing more treacherous methods by which the police state openly uses the outward forms of democracy in order to maintain itself. Opposition is stifled by artifice rather than by brute force. The earlier tyrants killed democracy as a spider kills a fly. The police state of today resembles more the wasp that paralyses a caterpillar so that it can lay its eggs in living flesh. The victim remains outwardly an untainted caterpillar, but inwardly it is a mass of infection and decay.

The true democracies of the West, though greatly changed in form, are in the direct line of development from the Greek city state. The changes are mostly due to two causes: the increase in the size of the democracy, and the extension of the suffrage to all adults. The average city state in Greece was a small town, comparable to an ordinary urban district in England. The largest, Athens, was no bigger than, say, Leicester or Croydon. The electorate comprised only a small proportion of this small population; the slaves (i.e., the labouring classes), the women and all foreign-born citizens were excluded from the franchise, so that only a few hundreds or at most a few thousands in any one state could exercise the vote. In so far as such a state was able to reach wise political decisions, its success was due partly to the exclusion of the labouring classes who were entirely without education. An uneducated electorate cannot be reached by an appeal to the intelligence; education must precede the vote. The appeal to the emotions on the other hand, to which all people except the highly educated may respond, is a dangerous tool with which to forge public policy. The best democracies are unable to

avoid entirely the emotional factor, particularly during election campaigns. In countries such as Italy and the Balkan states where a considerable proportion of the electorate is illiterate, and where in consequence party appeals and even voting papers are in the form of pictures rather than words, the emotional factor far outweighs all others. In the educated democracy the emotional factor, though present, is discounted by many of the voters, and decisions by and large are taken as a result of some attempt at logical reasoning.

Most of the problems of democracy today can be traced either to the educational qualifications of the electorate or to the greatly enlarged size of the modern electorate. The theory of democracy rests on the assumption that the voter has sufficient intellectual ability to make it possible for him to reach a reasonably logical decision on the simple issues which can be placed before a large electorate. This means at least that the voter must be able to read and write with fluency, and to comprehend the nature of the arguments for and against the questions on which he must vote. With these qualifications, his vote *may* rest on some sort of logic. Without them, it rests almost inevitably either on emotion or on subservience to his leaders, or on blind chance. The voter bases his decision on material from a number of sources : the Press, books, radio, posters, political speeches, the discussions of his companions. Pressure from those able to affect his security and welfare such as his trades union or his employers may influence him. In some countries strong pressure is exercised by religious groups. In the pseudo-democracies decisive pressure comes from the ruling political faction. Thus harassed the average man commonly takes the easiest path, considering first his

own safety and peace of mind. Some of these influences are legitimate ; others are not. There is a fair distinction between *influence* and *pressure*. The former gives a lead, but leaves a relatively free decision to the voter. The latter deprives him of the chance to make up his mind freely. In this sense influence is legitimate and pressure illegitimate.

Of these various influences the library is concerned mainly with the printing press. In the field of politics this means for the average voter the daily and weekly papers. The more serious enquirer relies also however on books dealing with economic, social and religious as well as political questions ; and the influence of books plays a larger part in forming opinion than might be imagined because the term "serious enquirer" includes political agents, trade union officials, candidates for election and other people whose avowed mission is to mould public opinion towards definite ends. The influence of the Press in a free democracy is on the whole healthier, more constructive and more intelligent than the other influences which we have mentioned for various reasons. In the first place it allows for the simultaneous presentation of different points of view, so that argument and counter-argument can be weighed at one time. The fact that the individual voter commonly subscribes to one paper only does not invalidate this. In any group of society the opinions of the more important papers commonly become subjects for general discussion. Moreover the library displays in its reading rooms newspapers and periodicals of every type, so that the intelligent enquirer can strike his own balance between them. The danger in Press propaganda lies not in the bias with which it is presented, but in the attempt to suppress

the fact that another side to the question exists. It is to the credit of the Press in most of the free democracies that few reputable papers, however inadequately they treat such questions, deliberately conceal this fact. Indeed, many give space freely to reasoned opposition, if only in the hope of destroying their opponent's case. Even if the other side of the question is for this purpose misrepresented, it still reveals the fact that some intelligent people do hold contrary opinions which command support, and this is the first step in making possible free and enlightened discussion. Another advantage of the printed word in this connection is that it allows a considered judgment to be made at leisure and after due reflection. The radio talk, the political speech, and the religious sermon compel an immediate reaction. If they do not achieve it, their effect is in great part lost. The audience is therefore driven to submit to the speaker before it has had time to think. A decision made thus is a decision based on emotion or on logical trickery rather than on reasoned thought. Further, the audience is not in a position to "answer back" either to the radio talk or to the sermon; and though a political speech may be seasoned with interjections or questions, there is rarely opportunity for an effective reply. The only type of speech which can be fairly answered is the speech in a well-organised debate. The newspaper article or book however not only gives time for reflection but remains on record for purposes of reference or comparison with other discussions of the question. It can be digested at leisure when the blood is cool and the senses undisturbed by the stage-effects of the orator and the passions of a crowded audience.

The second problem of modern democracy is the

problem of size—a trouble which the Greek city states in those simpler days happily escaped. The industrial revolution brought many evils in its train, but none more devastating than the swollen growth of the body politic and of all the groups which compose it. In the last hundred years every kind of human institution, whether it be armies, navies, industrial firms, government organisations, societies for this or that, schools, hospitals, hotels, shops, towns or cities, has been expanding, dilating, swelling to greater girth and more exaggerated bulk. Size has a hypnotic effect. We tend to think that size itself is a sign of progress. We grow to believe that size has an absolute value of its own. It has not. All true philosophy and all true religion cries out that the worship of size is the temptation of power. It is the temptation that takes us up into an exceeding high mountain and shows us all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them: "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." The argument in favour of size is always the argument in favour of efficiency and economy. If we combine forces we shall be stronger, and we shall save money—so runs the thesis. And it has sufficient truth to make it difficult to refute until it is too late to retract. Stronger, yes, for good; but stronger also for evil. The temptation of greater power is placed in the hands of the few men in command, and the effect of their misdeeds as well as of their good deeds is magnified. Waste and duplication may be avoided, but the expense of administration is increased. The modern answer to this dilemma is decentralisation. But once an organisation has been centralised, its centrifugal force resists devolution, clogging the machinery as treacle clogs the feet of the struggling fly. The greater and more



complicated the machine, the more difficult it is for the individual unit to free itself from the trap. All human organisations, whether in industry or in local government, tend to develop a cancerous process of unwanted growth. The simile of cancer is apt, because the multiplication of cells becomes meaningless and unrelated to the organism as a whole. Growth within limits is necessary, but the limits are constantly outrun. The significance of this malignant swelling to our present topic is evident, because every new outgrowth adds new fetters to the freedom of the individual. The greater the administrative machine, the less the individual counts. The small machine may assist the individual to realise and express his own individuality. The great machine kills it. The disease of giantism is abroad ; the food of the gods (or maybe of the devil) is mercilessly adding cell upon cell to the distorted organism.

Elsewhere I have written of the need to increase the size of library areas in Great Britain. This does not contradict what I say here, because parochialism stifles individual freedom as much as giantism. Our present contention does however set firm limits to the desirable size of any local government area ; and if we value our freedom we shall be wise to keep well within those limits. With libraries the lower limits are relatively high. There is no virtue in smallness for its own sake, any more than in size ; the machine must be large enough to work. The cult of the miniature is as much a worship of false gods as the cult of giantism. The workshop must at least be large enough to house the worker's tools ; and as the tools of scholarship are so various, the library must be reasonably large if it is to be useful. The higher limits are determined

largely by the problem of administration. Wise administration *may* overcome some of the difficulties of great size. But present-day experience of the administration of swollen organisations such as the coal, electricity and transport services in Great Britain suggests that skilled administration cannot always be bought, even at ten thousand a year. There are not enough human beings of the necessary calibre in existence. The education and health services point the same lesson. On the other hand there is a great deal of evidence to show that the most successful of all general libraries are those of a moderate size—the middletown library which is large enough to stock most of the student's tools, and yet not so large that the personal factor in its administration is overwhelmed by the complexity of the machinery. The library of this middle size which is in good hands stands out unmistakably from its fellows, simply because it is alive, while the rest are devitalised. It is true that many middletown libraries are also moribund, but it does not follow that they can be re-awakened by increasing their size. More probably they need a surgical operation to restore their vitality—or a new librarian.

The personal element is important in all organisations that have dealings with the public. Many of us would instinctively prefer to buy our groceries at a well-managed private shop, rather than at a branch of a multiple store. The advantages of the chain store, or even of the co-operative store, rarely seem to compensate for the loss of the personal element that comes with any kind of amalgamation or enlargement. In libraries the personal element is of even greater importance, because we are not dealing in standardised goods but in the highly specialised requirements of the

individual. Librarianship is above all an individual service ; there is no room for standardisation in the goods it supplies or the services it performs. And yet every branch of a large municipal or county library is in a sense a chain store, facing the dangers that beset all multiple stores. We can only counter those dangers by seeing that each system of branches is big enough to supply the services for which it was set up, yet not so big as to sink beneath the weight of an overloaded administration. The rules which are needed to bind the units into a system must not be such as to destroy the personality of each unit. This happy result is not easy to achieve, but it is not impossible unless the system is too large. The object always is to preserve the freedom of the separate unit together with the advantages of limited combination.

What is this freedom, and why are we so concerned about it? Is it really worth the "great sum" with which it must be obtained. For although we are free-born citizens of one of the few countries in which freedom is still recognised as having a value of its own, yet a high price must be paid if we are to retain it in the face of so many enemies at home as well as abroad who would rob us of it if they could.

The word "freedom," like the word "democracy," is used and misused to signify many things. It may mean anything from chaos to laissez-faire, from ordered liberty to a condition so hedged about with restrictions that it is free in little but name. The true meaning is a liberty of mind and body supported by such restrictions as are necessary to maintain it in being. The restrictions are the framework without which it could not exist. They are hampering only if they are imposed capriciously, or for some purpose

other than the ordering of true liberty. Restrictions accepted for the sake of liberty are not felt as restrictions by the healthy mind. They do not therefore restrict ; rather do they make free action possible. It is the consciousness of freedom that makes liberty real. Freedom in this sense is relative to experience and to capabilities. We are in a sense prisoners on this earth ; but the fact that nobody has ever been to the moon and few would wish to go makes this imprisonment of no interest. A dog on a chain is not free, because the chain pulls him back wherever he moves. But it is conceivable that an animal at Whipsnade may be completely free, provided he is not conscious of the boundaries within which he is enclosed. The boundaries are wider than his consciousness, and may indeed be in themselves the necessary condition of his true freedom.

The freedom with which we are particularly concerned may be broadly described as the freedom of the mind. It includes :

(1) Freedom of study ; freedom to learn where and what one chooses without fear of restriction or direction.

(2) Freedom of thought ; freedom to employ the results of study and to follow up to its logical conclusions the creative thinking thus engendered.

(3) Freedom of speech ; freedom to express without pain or penalty the results of creative thought ; freedom to test by argument and discussion creative thought in the making.

(4) Freedom of the Press ; freedom to publish the results of study and the discussions on which they are based.

(5) Freedom of circulation ; freedom to spread

broadcast through journals, bookshops and libraries without any hindrance the published results of thought whatever they may be.

(6) Freedom of instruction ; freedom to teach to others the results of human thought, wherever such teaching may lead.

These six aims of freedom cover the whole process of mental activity from learning to teaching. Though each of these aims is vital, the ones that affect us here most closely are the fourth and the fifth, on both of which all creative librarianship depends. All six freedoms are supported by the minimum framework of restrictions which is needed to make the freedom a reality. These restrictions are in accord with the commonly accepted maxims of ethics and the ordinary rules of fair play and social welfare. Free speech for example means not merely freedom for the speaker but a free hearing for his opponent. Again, freedom of discussion is valueless if it ends in slander, libel or violence, or in actions that are likely to incite violence. Liberty of discussion must also recognise the existence of a social conscience on subjects of vital importance ; and while a minority view is always given a fair hearing, yet when action is needed the judgment of the majority is accepted and endorsed by everyone, whatever his private views. The ready and cheerful acceptance by the minority of the general will is the mark of the true democracy. The failure of the minority to accept the majority ruling indicates either that the idea of democracy has not been firmly established, or that society is split by so deep a cleavage that living together becomes impossible. Democracy is a method of living together in society, and it presumes a certain degree of amity. It is not a piece of magic which can bring

together in harmony people who are irreconcilable by temperament or religion, any more than the act of marriage can by itself reconcile two people who are fundamentally antipathetic.

Neither scholarship nor librarianship can accept any restrictions of liberty other than those required by good order. In times of emergency it may be held that the safety of the State requires the imposition of much greater restrictions. Experience however shows that war-time controls can in a democracy be limited to questions of strategy and technique (e.g., weather reports) and to material likely to promote disaffection, leaving untouched the general liberty of the Press and the freedom of the people to think for themselves and to criticise the conduct of affairs. The good scholar and the good librarian will reject and openly denounce any restrictions of freedom other than those we have mentioned. Such restrictions may be expected from various sources. They may come from the capricious interference of busybodies concerned with local government. They may come indirectly from "pressure groups" representing special interests. In a free democracy we are familiar with attempts at interference of this kind, and though they are irritating there are ways of countering them. More important and more powerful than these are those forces which as a matter of policy deny the right to liberty of thought. There are two influences of this type in the world today: the influence of religion, which in certain circumstances uses its authority to restrict individual freedom; and the influence of communism. Let us give a moment's thought to each of these.

Fortunately the librarian is also a human being. This means that however neutral he may be in his

professional capacity, he nevertheless owes a personal allegiance to the creed of his choice, or at least has his personal views on the beliefs of those around him. There is no question of divided loyalty here. Whatever his faith, he must believe in the ultimate victory of truth—*magna est veritas et praevalabit*. Thus fortified, he has no fears in allowing every creed to state its own case fairly through the medium of his library, knowing that the true faith will not suffer thereby. This admittedly is a long-term policy from the point of view of religion, for the triumph of truth may be deferred. Yet what matters is surely the fact of its triumph, not the time when that triumph is realised. Religious faith is based on revelation. Although human imperfections may prevent us from justifying it rationally now, we must believe first that it cannot be repugnant to human reasoning today, and secondly that in due course a reconciliation between logic and revelation will be effected. The devout believer need not fear therefore the impact of logical thought on revealed doctrine.

In this country at the present time we are rarely disturbed by the efforts of religious intolerance to restrict the freedom of knowledge. There are other countries where the situation is different. Restrictions however are rarely placed directly on academic research. They are more likely to take the form of preventing access on the part of young people or of the semi-educated to anti-religious literature, and of the establishment of an *index expurgatorius*. The total effect of such restrictions is not in general serious. Discretion in the issue of books to young people is in accord with orthodox librarianship; and though an index of prohibited books offends the canons of good

librarianship, its influence on scholarship is usually slight. The works on the index are rarely those required by the normal student, and the specialist has his own methods of acquiring what he needs. Religious influence is more powerful and more to be feared when used indirectly and with all the artifices of psychology by the individual priest over his congregation. Rightly or wrongly the power of the priest in his own parish is in some countries very great indeed. He may use it for good ; or he may use it to smother opposition. As a short-term policy with an uneducated congregation this may be an effective method from his own point of view. The danger however is that in stamping out opposition by the weight of your own personality, you are smothering also the ability to think freely and creatively. To the outsider it would seem that a surer method would be to attack false doctrine fairly and in the open, meeting argument with argument and reasons with better reasons. The truth can scarcely come to grief, in such a contest. The brilliant student will doubtless escape from this repressive atmosphere, but it must indeed have a depressing effect on the intellectual level of the congregation as a whole. The trouble undoubtedly arises from the absence of a proper appreciation of the value and the potentialities of the human mind ; and the fact that the priest himself may be but semi-educated partially explains this lamentable attitude. The human mind and the human body working in true freedom are among the most wonderful of God's creations ; and the danger that both may on occasion be misused is a poor argument against their good use. Religious interference produces its unhappiest results perhaps in countries where there are two opposing



sects of similar size and influence. The nation may then be divided into two separate communities, isolated ecologically in distinct environments though dwelling side by side. When this, as sometimes happens, involves the duplication of schools, libraries and other social services for each community the rift is widened still further ; institutions which should bind the nation together are thus employed to emphasise its disunity. No librarian can rest happily under such an arrangement.

Although librarianship, like scholarship, must be free in the true sense of the word, this does not mean that a library loses thereby its individuality. Every library is to some extent coloured by its environment ; every library reflects the community it serves, and assimilates itself to its intellectual surroundings. It can and should do this while still remaining free in its scholarship and book selection. A library serving, shall we say, a Catholic community will naturally reflect the interests of that community in its book-stock. Whether it does so without unscholarly prejudice ; whether its real aim is the advancement of knowledge or religious propaganda : this rests with the librarian and his authority. A religious library may legitimately pursue its avowed purpose, and it will stand or fall by the work it does ; it is a special library pursuing its own purposes. But a general library, whether academic or popular, which uses its general title deliberately to cloak sectarian propaganda, is guilty not merely of bad librarianship but of sheer dishonesty.

Communism is today a far more serious threat to liberty than any religious creed. It is indeed a pseudo-religion, with all the evils and none of the redeeming

characteristics of a genuine faith ; based on a rationalist theory, but denying blindly the dignity of the individual human mind ; proclaiming with utter unscrupulousness the justification of the means by the end, so that honour, loyalty and good faith can all be sacrificed to achieve an aim which in itself is incapable of justification by any accepted code of ethics—in a word, the speciously rationalised lust for power. During the fateful “ years between ” we saw this lust focussed on a racial theory which by its nature could not be propagated beyond the limits of that race. Now we see it directed towards an idea which like cholera or the plague is capable of poisoning the whole world unless the disinfectant of common sense is applied in time. No man of good sense or good scholarship is deceived for one moment by the trappings of logic with which this lust is disguised ; therefore scholarship, learning and librarianship are the first victims of its onslaught.

The librarian is trained to view all creeds, all dogmas, all theories of politics or ethics with professional neutrality. He lets every thinker, whether his thoughts be wise or foolish, state his own case freely and without favour ; he knows that with unhampered debate and open discussion over the years the sound argument will triumph and the lost cause will disappear into history. His library is built firmly on this rock ; this is the major principle on which his book-selection is founded. In this atmosphere of calm and impartial assurance he will continue, come what may, to represent fairly on his shelves the successes and failures of every human belief, be it orthodoxy or heresy, be it reactionary Toryism or political materialism. Only thus can truth prevail. Two things, and two alone, set

a limit to this neutrality. One is the safety of the state, and this consideration never operates except in extreme danger. The other is the sanctity of the idea of freedom which governs the librarian's whole vocation. When a power arises which denies this vocation or threatens to prostitute it to its own illicit purposes, he must stand and denounce it with all the strength that is in him. Whether it be communism or totalitarianism or any other iconoclastic ideology, he must use all the faith and fire within him to guard his freedom. When neutrality means suicide only the blind can remain calm. If we value our calling therefore, if true democracy and the freedom of scholarship mean to our hearts all that we profess with our lips, then we must fearlessly proclaim the danger not of communism as a political theory, but of its inevitable implications in the sphere of libraries and of learning. This does not mean that we reject from our shelves its manuals and its propaganda ; in doing that we should be false to ourselves and to our faith in freedom. It does however mean that we must not cease to declare openly the danger that besets us. In this country it may seem that there is greater security than elsewhere. But there is no security anywhere against the infiltration of this insidious poison unless we constantly reiterate our faith, not merely in democracy (for that can be infected by this virus and transformed into pseudo-democracy), but in the sanctity of individual freedom.

Let us therefore repeat the six freedoms of our creed. We believe in the freedom of study ; the freedom of thought ; the freedom of speech ; the freedom of the Press ; the freedom of the circulation of knowledge ; and the freedom of instruction.

We believe further that these six forms of freedom

may be threatened from two sources. First by the size to which democratic institutions so readily grow under modern conditions ; for this reason we hold that libraries established by public authorities should not be larger, or serve a larger area, than genuine efficiency requires. When freedom is at stake, some of the potential benefits of size may be sacrificed to it ; this at least is better than to sacrifice freedom to size. Secondly, freedom may be threatened by religious or political doctrines which deny the absolute value of the liberty of thought. The most dangerous of such doctrines today is the pseudo-religion of communism, and the librarian who is true to the principles of democratic librarianship and the liberty of knowledge will resist with all his power the intrusion of totalitarian ethics into this field. The danger is very real indeed ; and all who are engaged in the tasks of writing, research or teaching and in the care, preservation and utilisation of books are in the front line of the battle. We may justly pray that every librarian wherever he may be, will remain loyal to the principles of his calling, and will not betray the trust of the scholars, the teachers and the students who use his library.

## EPILOGUE

THE theme of these essays is the theory of librarianship. We have examined the complaints of our American colleagues that librarianship lacks a theoretic discipline of its own. We have agreed that, though such a discipline is not to be credited with the term "philosophy of librarianship," nevertheless it is needed as a necessary basis for professional training. Such a discipline should include a study of librarianship as a whole, its purpose, definition and relations with other subjects. Much work remains to be done in this field, but an outline of the subject is given in Chapter II. We have followed this with a survey of the whole field of librarianship and of the subjects which the student must master if he is to qualify in his profession ; and we have taken this survey as an answer to those who have doubted whether librarianship had sufficient academic value to justify the establishment of a postgraduate course. This survey shows also that there is no room in the curriculum for extraneous subjects if the true field of librarianship is to be covered adequately. It introduces also the concept of librarianship as *applied bibliography*, and it is suggested that this concept is valuable in emphasising the real significance and relationship of all the many subjects which come together to make up the complex field of our professional work.

We proceeded from applied bibliography to a discussion of the theory of one of its sub-divisions, namely,

arrangement or classification. This is of interest because it is the only aspect of applied bibliography which has so far developed a theoretic discipline of its own. Our aim here has been to stress the fact that classification is a practical technique which cannot be abstracted from the special purposes to which it is applied ; in other words, that classification must be essentially purposive. Like all practical methods, a classification scheme must be tested not by its conformity to logical foundations but by its success or failure in libraries themselves. Does it work in actual practice ? If it does, it is a good scheme ; if it does not, it is bad.

Finally we selected one of the relationships mentioned briefly in Chapter II, namely, the relation between librarianship and politics, and expanded it into a study of liberty and knowledge. This was selected partly to illustrate the nature of these relationships which have never yet been adequately worked out in detail, but more particularly because it raises problems which are more pressing, more difficult and more vital than most librarians in English-speaking countries yet realise.

This is but an introduction to the theory of applied bibliography. None of its many problems has been adequately solved in these short chapters. But the book will have served its purpose if it sets librarians thinking along new lines, and if as a result both teachers and students can see more clearly the unity that underlies the complex subject that we call librarianship.

## APPENDIX

### APPLIED BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Here is given in summary form the system of applied bibliography discussed in Chapter IV.)

1. *Theory of librarianship.* The principles, purpose and scope of librarianship ; relations with other subjects.
2. *History of records, graphic and printed.* History of reading, and of libraries, printing, publishing and bookselling.
3. *Graphic records.* (a) Elementary English palæography.  
(b) Elementary archive administration.  
(c) Special subjects : Advanced palæography, administrative history, archive administration, mediæval Latin, Anglo-Norman French.<sup>1</sup>
4. *Printed records.* Invention of printing ; printing types ; paper ; collation ; binding ; illustration processes.
5. *Historical bibliography.* Description, arrangement, identification, editions, texts, bibliographies.
6. *Modern bibliography.* Description, cataloguing ; arrangement, classification, theory and practice.

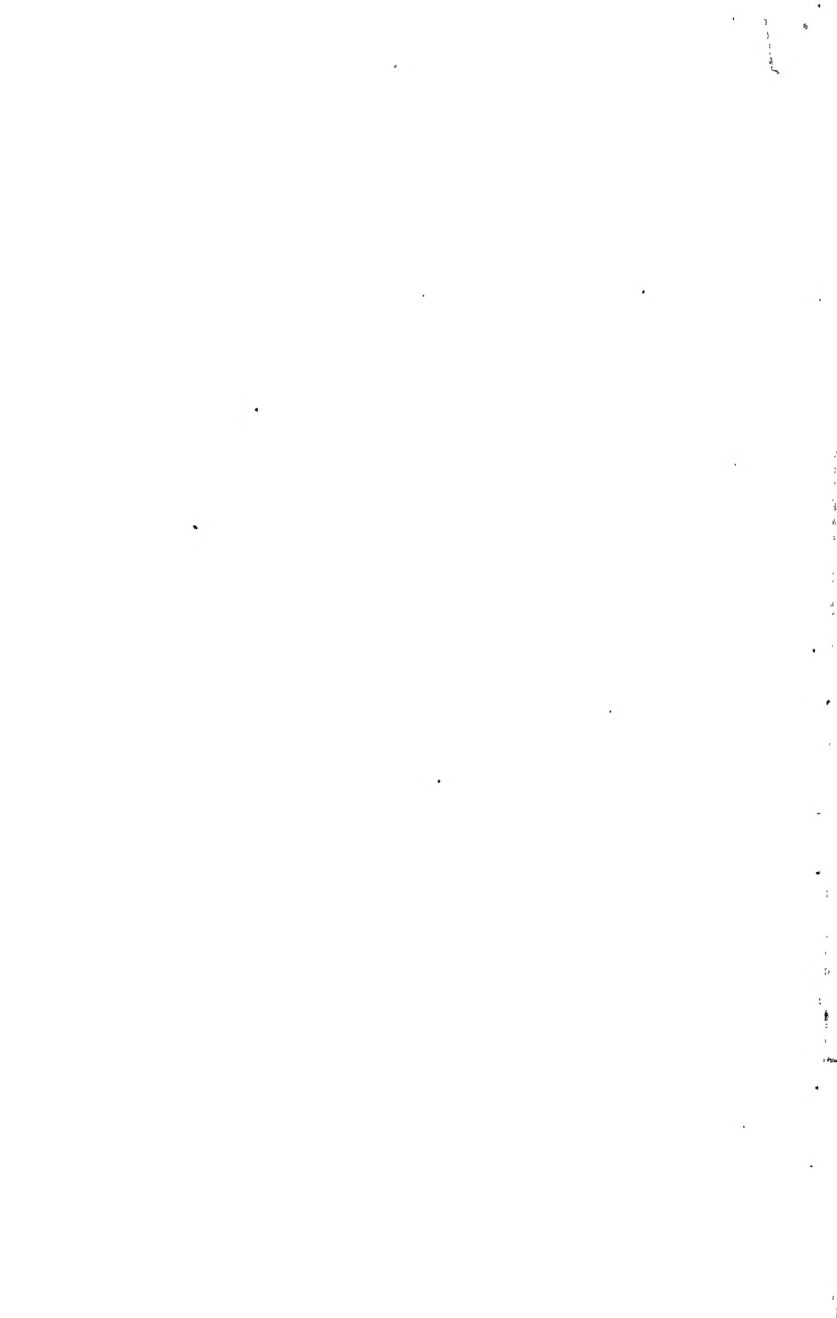
<sup>1</sup> In countries other than Great Britain the appropriate languages would be substituted.

## APPENDIX

Research materials, editions, texts. Literature of special subjects. Reproduction, photostats, microfilms. Book selection ; surveys. Author and subject bibliographies ; guides to reading.

7. *Information.* (a) Elementary documentation, indexing, abstracting.  
(b) Advanced information work.
8. *Special types of libraries. Co-operation.*
  - (a) National, university, public, school, special libraries ; organisation, staffing, planning, routine methods, publicity, reports, committee work.
  - (b) Co-operation, national and international ; UNESCO ; national bibliographical centres ; international bibliographical organisations.





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